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Guilty But Insane:

Psychology, Law and Selfhood

in Golden Age Crime Fiction

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Abstract

Writers of golden age crime fiction (1920 to 1945), and in particular female writers, have been seen by many critics as socially and politically detached. Their texts have been read as morality tales, theoretically rich *mise en scenès*, or psychic fantasies, by necessity emerging from an historical epoch with unique cultural and social concerns, but only obliquely engaging with these concerns by toying with unstable identities, or through playful, but doomed, private transgressions. The thesis overturns assumptions about the crime novel as a negation of the present moment, detached and escapist, by demonstrating how crime narratives responded to public debates which highlighted some of the most pressing legal and philosophical concerns of their time.

Grounded in meticulous historical research, the thesis draws attention to contemporary debates between antagonistic psychological schools – giving equal space to debates within psychoanalysis and adaptive neuroscience – and charts how these debates were reflected in crime writing. Chapter two explores the contestation of the M'Naghten laws on criminal responsibility in light of Ronald True's case (1922), followed by readings of crime narratives in which perpetrators have ambiguous and controversial legal status in regard to criminal responsibility. At the intersection of psychiatric discourse and the popular literary imagination, a critical and ethical perspective developed which not only conveyed a version of psychological discourse to a wider public, but profoundly reworked the foundations of the genre as the ritual unveiling of deviancy and the restoration of the rational institutions of society. In similar vein, chapter three explores the status of the 'Born Criminal' in law and medicine, and looks at crime writer Gladys Mitchell's efforts to expose both the pitfalls of categorisation, and competing discourses' limitations in adequately accounting for crime. Chapter four, whilst maintaining close medical-legal focus, opens up the study to consider how understandings of deviant selfhood in modernist writing inflected crime writers' representations of unconscious and epileptic killers. Finally, chapter five continues this intertextual approach by asserting that certain crime novels express an exhaustion with the genre's classic rational and scientific heroes, and turn instead to the affective epistemologies and

notions of subconscious synthesis concomitantly being celebrated in modernist writing. Altering the position of the authoritative detective in ways that profoundly alter the politics of the form, the chapter and the thesis in total propose a reading of golden age crime fiction more responsive to cultural, psychological and legal debates of the era, leading to a reassessment of the form as neither escapist nor purely affirmative of the status quo.

Introduction: Whodunit? Why and How.

The aftermath of the Great War saw the decline of the short story of detection and the rise of the mystery novel, and with it, the rise of a new breed of crime writers. Their works have been known as formal English detective novels, classic crime fictions, whodunits, murder mysteries, clue puzzles, and the ubiquitous golden age mystery. A division of mass publishing previously associated with sensational heroism and produced by celebrated male authors such as Wilkie Collins and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, during the interwar years the genre came to be dominated by immensely popular, influential and irreverent female writers, the 'Queens of Crime' as they have been termed (see Scaggs 26; Munt 7; Shaw and Vanacker 27). Agatha Christie began to produce a bestseller on a near yearly basis after the publication of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* in 1920, while between 1923 and 1939 the poet, scholar, and lay theologian Dorothy L. Sayers won acclaim through eleven novels and three short story collections featuring her charismatic aristocratic sleuth, Lord Peter Wimsey. Coincident with the sustained growth of a female readership supplied with books by local libraries and lending services at Boots the Chemists (see Symons 93), these novels frequently located criminal deviance in the English country house, drew attention to clues which had specific relevance to the home, and placed familial dysfunction at the heart of the mystery (see Knight, *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* 109; Munt 8; Thompson 128-9).

In a trend started by the hard-boiled crime writer Raymond Chandler in his 1950 essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," Sayers, Christie and their peers – most obviously Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh – have been condemned by some for their so-termed feminisation of the genre and their light-hearted portrayals of domestic murders. Chandler has particular contempt for admirers of the golden age novel, 'the flustered old ladies – of both sexes (or no sex) and almost all ages – who like their murders scented with magnolia blossoms and do not care to be reminded that murder is an act of infinite cruelty (196-7). Associating golden age tropes with pungently aging femininity and masculine lack, Chandler's criticisms are reiterated in Julian Symons' 1972 *Bloody*

Murder, in which the author asserts that golden age novels were 'written specifically for maiden aunts,' (98) and located in a 'fairy tale' land in which 'murder was committed again and again without anybody getting hurt' (104).

Widely held perceptions of the golden age crime novel persist. It has been classed as a 'cosy' form (Munt 8), generic, homogeneous (see Munt 7; Shaw and Vanacker 10), and ideologically committed to containing deviant elements that threaten the bourgeois status quo (see Knight, *Form and Ideology* 128-9). Alison Light terms the clue puzzle novel 'a literature of convalescence' (65) because in the aftermath of the First World War, to a generation experiencing unprecedented social upheaval and the psychological repercussions of prolonged and catastrophically deadly conflict, the certainty of a resolution to a problem had therapeutic advantages.

In recent years, feminist scholarship by Sally R. Munt, Gill Plain, Susan Rowland, Marian Shaw and Sabine Vanacker, has highlighted instances of gender transgression, deviance and heterodoxy in golden age writing. Drawing attention to constructions of the body as 'uncontainable and excessive,' (Plain 27) their studies in various respects address the cultural anxieties to which golden age crime fictions speak, and expose the personal and political tensions which underlay these otherwise conservative forms of popular writing. By detecting the feminist content of golden age narratives, bent as they are on the examination of domestic scenarios, social relations and structures of power within the bourgeois and aristocratic home, feminist studies have led the way for a revaluation of the crime novels of the interwar years. Probing notions of stable identity, gender roles and class positions in pursuit of a malefactor who is emphatically not *other,* but who is part of a social milieu rendered unfamiliar, the golden age novel has undeniable subversive potential, even if it is obligatory that the transgressor will eventually be captured and ejected. What this scholarship has yet to address are approaches to the mental state of the transgressor in crime fiction. This is a significant ellipsis, and addressing it will provide a fuller account of the ways in which golden age crime fiction responded to contemporary discourses of mental illness, and in turn, participated in the scientific and medical discussions of its day. So too will it

respond in a meaningful way to recent crime scholarship's detection of subversive and critical tendencies within the form. If mental illness is seen to have been fostered by the environment in which the criminal has been nurtured, the bourgeois family for example, this provides ample opportunity to critique the social structures which make people so unhealthy. If mental ill health, even criminal insanity, is presented as not an acquired condition but something inborn, its chance occurrence in otherwise 'normal' communities presents problems with defining otherness, as the criminal is in the tricky position of being at once both culturally inside and biologically outside of the social group. The ways in which crime novels represent mental illness and work it into their plots are profoundly responsive to social anxieties and social prejudices, and as such a necessary point of enquiry precipitated by recent scholarship.

Building upon, and extending the focus of existing research, this study will examine developments in psychiatric and psychological discourses of the pre-war and interwar years, in order to contextualise the statements golden age crime writers made about human psychology, the motivations of criminals, and the divisions their novels make between the normal and abnormal mind. Heightened sensitivity to psychological traits and abnormalities defines golden age writing, but no study has yet addressed the complexities and the specificities of madness and psychology as they were understood during the interwar years, and as they were reflected in crime writing. Plainly, the novels of Gladys Mitchell are replete with references to the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, while in the late golden age work of Christianna Brand, the threat of madness agitates the psychic landscapes of communities already unsettled by political uncertainty, shifting loyalties and unstable social hierarchies. More subtle, and less remarked upon, are adaptations to the self-consciously formulaic detective narrative made in response to popular perceptions of insanity, debates about criminal responsibility and psychiatric discourses. Also demanding enquiry is the inflection of crime writing by contemporary modernist writing, which influenced representations of selfhood in the popular form. Grounded in historical research and comparative close readings, this study seeks to overturn assumptions about the crime novel as a negation of

the present moment, detached and escapist, by demonstrating how crime narratives responded to public events and cultural innovations which highlighted some of the most pressing legal and philosophical concerns of their day.

Focus of the Study

It is convenient to talk in general about 'golden age' crime novels, but throughout this study a number of different terms for this school of fiction – including the aforementioned 'clue puzzle', 'whodunit' and 'murder mystery' – will be used. This is in part to avoid tedious repetition, but also to draw demarcations where possible between different types of novel – for example, those in which no murder occurs, which can hardly be called murder mysteries, or those in which the enigmatic arrangement of clues (the clue-puzzle) takes precedence over the psychological enigma of the killer's identity (the whodunit). It will also help avoid giving the appearance of 'homogeneity' which Munt sees as defining most critical responses to writings of this period (3). In a number of ways, this study will extend the perimeters of the golden age, to discuss works authored by writers who only dipped briefly into detective writing, such as Miles Franklin and Georgette Heyer, and those who published during the Second World War, such as Christianna Brand, and to include works by male authors such as Michael Innes, who have not been considered in many of the most recent discussions of the genre. The simple reason for this is that some of the most interesting books, and most relevant to the argument of this thesis, were authored outside of the traditional 'golden age' and, just occasionally, by male authors. Although the years between the wars provide a neat demarcation, and the commencement of the Second World War a profound reason for literary tropes and generic expectations developed during the interwar years to become somewhat less than 'golden', certain works test these expectations. Brand and Mitchell produced novels during the 1940s in which the threat and realities of war are barely perceptible (Brand's 1945 *Green for Danger* being a notable exception) and which evoke, in spite of the global conflict, the fracturing Edwardiana of the classic golden

age. According to Chandler, writing in 1950, the golden age, 'for all practical purposes … is still here' (185).

The reasons for this are manifold: the interwar crime novel, even in its earliest forms, always manifested an ambivalent nostalgia for a period and form of life that had already become impossible, and by the 1940s this lifestyle was no more impossible, or less compelling. The persistence of golden age tropes beyond the onset of the Second World War may be criticised as an escapist strategy which comforted readers unwilling to confront the reality of global turmoil (writers have certainly been accused of ignoring the political realities of the 1930s for much the same reason). Understanding how representations of madness and psychology communicate meaning in these texts will expose how such representations constitute not only a direct engagement with contemporary mental health debates, but an indirect contemplation of wider social evils, from poverty to class prejudice, sexism to fascism. It is highly relevant that a number of the novels under consideration here were published immediately before and in the early years of the Second World War, including Gladys Mitchell's *St Peter's Finger* (1938), *When Last I Died* (1941) and *Laurels are Poison* (1942); Christianna's Brand's *Heads You Lose* (1941) and Margery Allingham's *Traitor's Purse* (1941). Psychological themes and modes of enquiry are striking in these texts, a trend noticed by Symons, who states that late golden age mystery writers 'were inclined to ask Why rather than How and their Why was often concerned with the psychological make-up and social background of killer and killed' (153-4). For Symons, the cause of this increased psychological focus lies in an exhaustion with the interwar form's assumption that human motivation and human affairs were, at basis, reasonable. The golden age's complacent belief in the ultimate triumph of a reasonable social order was overturned by the coming of war and the rise of 'force' and 'irrational doctrines' (Symons 148) on the Continent. Psychology is treated as a means of understanding such unreason. So too does it help explain crimes that are not the product of careful thought, or worked-out by a rational individual with a reasonable motivation, but are inspired by beliefs founded on desires which, to the observer, may resemble madness. During the late 1930s, many

authors turned their detectives to war work and espionage, (e.g. Allingham in *Traitor's Purse* – see chapter five – and Christie in her 1941 *N or M?*) pitting them against fascist villains and fifth columnists, but even in novels in which the war is not mentioned, irrationality bleeds into the narrative through representations of insane motivations and mad reasoning (*Heads You Lose*, discussed in chapters 1-2, is a prime example). As my attention to novels which feature madness and psychology will show, the notion of 'reason' was itself far from stable during the earlier years of the period, with texts like Dorothy L. Sayers' *Whose Body?* (1923) interrogating its meaning and offering alternative epistemologies in its stead.

Psychology and Detection

Jon Thompson has noted that 'it is an interesting – and little-remarked-upon – aspect of the formal English novel of detection that insanity nearly always figures as part of its atmosphere or mental landscape' (131). Insanity is used as a metaphor for impending disorder, to light-heartedly mock unusual behaviour, and is suggested as a motive in many a false solution. Madness pervades golden age crime fiction, but the ways in which it was understood and accounted for are neither uniform nor disconnected from the medical and psychological theories that were discussed and debated during the period. The human cost of the First World War must be measured by its psychological repercussions, as well as by the devastating slaughter of the conflict itself. From the late 1910s, war neurosis became a public concern, sparking debates about the proper care of the mentally ill, the origins of mental turmoil and the constitution of the mind itself. Post-WW1 insights into the fragility of the mind helped reignite medical and legal debates which had been put on hold at the outbreak of war in 1914, and which had their origins in nineteenth century adaptive psychology and criminal anthropology. The post-War years were a period in which issues of mental health and criminal responsibility attained a prominent place in public discourse.

From the copious references in their texts, it is apparent that crime writers were concerned with mental health and followed medical and legal debates in the press. Susan

Rowland provides biographical surveys of Margery Allingham, Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers in her study (1-14), in which she highlights the significance of mental illness and psychology in these authors' lives. All experienced 'moments of psychological trauma' (7) as Rowland states, triggered by personal catastrophe – Sayers' unplanned and out-of-marriage pregnancy (8); Christie's dramatic disappearance in 1926 and purported amnesia following her discovery of her husband's affair (Rowland 2; also see Symons 106) – or caused by an underlying mental illness, as suffered by the manic-depressive Allingham, who in 1955 underwent electroconvulsive therapy (Rowland 8). Gladys Mitchell was amongst a new generation of women with access to higher education; she trained in teaching and encountered psychoanalysis as part of her education (there are parallels here with modernist authors Willa Muir, Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair, who like Mitchell used Freudian ideas to inform their writing). Christianna Brand worked as a nurse and a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse (VAD) during the Second World War, and it is no coincidence that depictions of medicine and mental illness are commonplace in her novels.

In spite of the evidence that golden age writers had many encounters with psychological theories and the medical treatment of mental illness, much scholarship on golden age crime fiction focuses upon the non-professional, perceptive and intuitive pseudo-psychological approaches to detection and criminal motivation in their texts. These approaches are frequently cited as aspects of a 'feminised' approach. Depending on the voiced or implicit ideological affiliations of the scholar, this feminisation has been interpreted either dismissively (see Chandler), radically (Munt 8-9) or as a 'front for a simpler method' more accessible and engaging for the reader (Knight, *Crime Fiction* 91). Is the psychology used in these texts simply the exercise of intuition, perception, common sense emotional awareness, or empathy? Or are more rigorous methodologies, more specific conditions, being represented?

This is an issue which has divided critics. In *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*, Knight cites an incident in Agatha Christie's 1923 murder mystery, *The Murder on the Links*, in which her iconic Belgian detective Hercule Poirot exposes the

psychological focus of his method as exercised upon the alluring killer Marthe Dubreuil. Poirot explains that the 'cold and calculating' Dubreuil's 'clever brain takes in the simplicity' (213) of the crime and perpetrates it with ease. This account is convincing and reasonable, but as Knight asserts, somewhat superficial: Poirot is doing 'no more than comprehending people in a general, untested way,' and he 'never shows any fuller grasp of psychological process' (111). To an extent, Knight is quite right – Christie's detective does not explicitely employ specialist psychological terminology or method in his investigation. Nonetheless, Christie's texts rely upon their readership's 'common-sense' understandings and assumptions about psychology and states of mind, which in spite of their surface simplicity, are profoundly shaped by the cultural dissemination of contemporary discourses of mental health. For example, Knight does not note the importance of heredity in Poirot's investigation of Dubreuil. The fact that she was the daughter of a notorious killer alerts Poirot to the fact that she is 'of the same … type as her mother' (*The Murder on the Links* 213) which makes her particularly likely to have committed the crime. These simple statements are as fit for interrogation as any other unspoken and ostensibly neutral and transparent feature of the novel's social reality which disguise relations of power – the expectation of primogeniture, the legal power of the father and the compromised agency of women, for example. Judgements about individual psychology based on parentage not only form part of the conceptual milieu of the period as Christie is representing it, but have a decisive and instructive value.

Why this is, and what kind of psychology is being practised when this is the case, opens up the possibility that intuitive psychologising is never merely a simple, common-sense calculation. Characters, detectives, readers, authors, do not respond to one another naturally, intuitively, or free from the influence of specialist methodologies and theories of mind. Dubreuil's inheritance, a perverse reversal of the financial inheritance of her fiancé and just as crucial to the plot, alerts the reader to a mind-set and moral nature that is out of the ordinary in a way that is not simply intuitive, but neither is it straightforwardly derived from a comprehensive psychological theory.

Crime fiction is a genre as concerned with the mystery of individuals as the mystery of the crime scene, therefore knowledge gleaned from an array of psychological discourses is frequently called upon to account for individual behaviour, overlapping, inconsistent and occasionally contradictory though this common stock of knowledge certainly was. Rather than bringing the reader closer to a true account, such psychologising often hints at the indeterminate and unknown true self of the individual under scrutiny. This is something addressed by Alison Light in her short but comprehensive account of Agatha Christie's conservative modernism. Light states:

> her whodunits … compulsively reiterate the same question, one which has the character of both fascination and fear: is this person what they seem? asks character after character of one another. What lies behind the calm façade which is their outward appearance? (88)

Character, to Light, is always ambivalent in Christie, a fact which make her mysterious plots possible, and which allows the mystery plot to function at the level of theme. The reader's tendency is towards empathy and identification with characters, but the mystery novel spurns this in favour of an iteration of social unease, a game of charades played again and again. Light proposes that Christie's fiction entails 'the evacuating of notions of character' (66). Painful existential anxieties such as 'the obsession with unstable identities, the ultimate unknowability of others,' which 'torment the writers of high culture' are dealt with comically, whilst maintaining the tension of 'ambivalence upon which the plot depends' (88). Light is quite right to note that, although the murderer is eventually revealed, and with them what lies behind the calm façade, the fictions are never completely reassuring. Insecurities are unresolvable, but the drive to know and the means through which communities drive to know are of persistent concern.

In *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell,* Susan Rowland proposes a Lacanian reading of detective novels, interpreting the works of Christie, Marsh, Sayers and Allingham according to the contestation between the disruptive potential of desire, the transgression of social norms and the ultimate impossibility of closure in a genre which seeks fantastically to overcome death. While performing such a psychoanalytically-

informed reading, Rowland asserts that contemporary psychological discourses were of limited relevance in the actual authorship of golden age crime novels. While Allingham would 'dip into Jungian theory to portray irrational, dysfunctional families' (92) Rowland asserts, she would not delve any deeper, nor use theoretical structures to actually inform the construction of the plot. A rejection of psychoanalysis as an explanation in crime fiction is central to Rowland's thesis and, citing Sayers' clear antagonism towards Freud in her novel *Gaudy Night*, Rowland asserts that '[w]hat golden age crime fiction does is to question the legitimacy of psychoanalysis functioning as a cultural authority claiming to explain all crime and deviance' (97). Psychoanalysis, to Rowland, is the subject of critique in crime fiction because of its social implications and its controversial accounts of sexual difference. It is also a threat to the open-ended, indeterminate and unreassuring narratives that Rowland sees as constituting the transgressive potential of the female-penned whodunit. As Rowland's study does not cover the works of Gladys Mitchell, it is not concerned with those novels of Mitchell's which claim to use psychoanalysis as a detection method, and as a means of explaining crime and deviance. In other works under consideration (as, for example, in Michael Innes' *Death at the President's Lodging* and Christie's *The ABC Murders*) psychoanalysis is one of a range of psychological disciplines which compete to explain criminality. As shall be seen, psychology in its many forms is often accepted as a legitimate cultural authority, but Rowland's uncertainty about the credibility of psychoanalysis in crime novels does stand. Psychoanalysis is not treated as the sole means of understanding and accounting for character and motivation during the period: other psychological theories inform narratives, and it is this study's objective to bring them to light and to discuss their effect on the plotting and the meaning of crime novels.

Reading the whodunit with a mind to recognising references to psychoanalysis can give the false impression that the theories of Sigmund Freud, in original or mediated form, settled like a mist upon the interwar British readership, rendering universally recognisable notions like the dynamic unconscious, repression and the Oedipus complex. The years before 1920 saw the first appearance of Freudian ideas in a palatable

public form in Britain and, according to the historian J.M. Roberts, by 1919 these ideas had become so familiar that 'a writer could use the phrase "Freudian complex" in a book about economic affairs and expect it to be understood' (292-3). Such understandings, however, remained generalised and unevenly disseminated, a social phenomenon whose recognition Roberts sees as intrinsic to an adequate account of the history of ideas:

> we tend to write the history of ideas in terms of innovators. That is sensible, in that the successful innovators put into circulation ideas which, in the long run, change society. But at the moment of their introduction they are likely to be taken up only by an 'advanced' intellectual elite, while the popular, widely diffused ideas which shape the ideas of many people are still those noted generations before. (178)

When many people thought about psychology during this period, both of the 'normal' individual and the criminal, their opinions might have been shaped by psychoanalysis, but so too might they have been influenced by ideas drawn from Social Darwinism, deterministic physiognomy or a resolutely mechanical neurophysiology. An account of competing theories of mind is given in the 'Theories of Mind' section of this introduction. The demands of space mean that this account is brief, and deals only with those aspects of psychological and scientific history which will be drawn on in ensuing discussions of texts. This account is, however, necessary, and will help to situate golden age crime novels in this dynamic and conflicting history, and to make sense of the confused and occasionally strange alliances made between the 'old' and the 'new' psychologies found in crime novels. Psychoanalytic ideas do not settle like a mist, but conflict with, overwhelm, co-exist or intermingle with other theories of mind which constituted, in the terminology of Raymond Williams, the dominant ideology, prior to the period and throughout it. Of the other two states of ideology that Williams describes in *Marxism and Literature* – emergent and residual – psychoanalysis was, at the beginning of the 1920s, emergent – a novel cultural and intellectual development which posed an alternative to the old (see R. Williams 121-127). By the late 1920s, psychoanalysis had become the dominant ideology for crime writers like Mitchell and

Allingham, although it was barely accepted within criminology and was ambivalently received by their contemporaries, Christie and Sayers, who drew from ideologies of adaptive and neurological psychologies, respectively.

Combined with its uneven cultural dissemination is the disclaimer that during the interwar years, psychoanalysis itself was less of a known quantity than is often assumed. A number of simplified accounts were published throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Britain in order to counter what the feminist author Rebecca West described as "this period of braying" (qtd. in Low, *Psycho-Analysis* 2) and what Percy T. Nunn diagnosed as the 'exaggeration and misunderstanding by ill-balanced and unhealthy minds,' of Freudian ideas, their 'exploitation by charlatans,' and the use of terminology comparable to the 'jargon of astrologists'(5-6). In Gladys Mitchell's *The Mystery of a Butcher's Shop* (1930), one young character remarks upon the profession of Mitchell's psychoanalyst-detective Mrs Bradley as a pretentious and slightly outdated fad: 'Psycho-analyst. I don't know what they do, quite. I believe it's something mad but brainy. The thing was all the rage two or three years ago' (62). Taking such uncertainties and interpretations into consideration, this study pays careful attention to the ways in which psychoanalysis was represented and (mis)understood in the interwar period.

Detection and the Law

At the intersection of psychological discourse and the popular literary imagination, psychologically-inflected crime fiction not only conveyed a version of psychological discourse to a wider public, but profoundly reworked the foundations of the genre as the ritual unveiling of deviancy and the restoration of the rational institutions of society. As much can be seen in the persistent interrogation of the law and the legal categories into which criminals fall once exposed by the detective. The replacement of the ingenious, hyper-rational murderer with a multitude of psychically disturbed villains, many of whom were of ambiguous and controversial legal status in regard to criminal responsibility, is accompanied in many novels by the refashioning of the detective as a figure with a superior and extra-legal moral and psychological perspective. In Gladys

Mitchell's psychoanalytic detective, who offers murderers the chance of redemption through her expert guidance, and in Christianna Brand's portrayal of bereaved characters who conspire to conceal the offender from formal legal justice, can be seen the development of a critical ethical perspective which both exemplifies crime writers' engagements with the most pressing moral issues of the time, and demonstrates their awareness of the ideological implications of their texts.

Influential in this history are the true crime narratives and the sensational murder trials reported in gory and exacting detail in newspapers such as the *Times,* which was a reliable source of court proceedings and a tool for the dissemination of information to both authors and their readership. Too little attention has been paid to the co-identities of interwar crime writers as both authors and readers of crime narratives. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been credited for his attempts to present 'realistic' portrayals of crime scenes, and for the impact his Sherlock Holmes tales had upon nascent forensic technology and the arts of detection as practised by the police (see Thomas 5). Writers of the golden age, on the contrary, have been seen as socially and politically detached (see Thompson 129, for example), their texts read as morality tales, theoretically rich *mise en scènes*, or psychic fantasies, by necessity emerging from a historical epoch with unique cultural and social concerns, but only willing to engage with these concerns by toying with unstable identities, playful, but doomed, transgressions or estranging affects. However, such unusual murder cases as that of Dr Crippen (1910), Ronald True (1922), Patrick Mahon (1924), and Dr Lockhart (1939) are not only mentioned in crime novels, but are responded to in ways that critique both public representations of killers and court processes. News reports which describe epileptic and unconscious killings also shaped crime narratives (as chapter four asserts), with novels playing upon the fears of the concealed nature of self and the threats of madness and deviance implicit in such accounts.

In *The Pursuit of Crime,* Dennis Porter discusses the conservatism of golden age writers. A crime 'implies the violation of a community code of conduct and demands a response in terms of the code,' he asserts, therefore the impetus to discover the murderer

attests to an ideological investment in 'the given order and the implied value system that helps sustain it' (120-1). The desire to discover and contain the murderer, to Porter, anticipates the legal processes of the actual social order, making crime fiction, with its fascination with isolating the criminal, an implicitly conservative fiction. This is a common stance, and by no means inaccurate: undoubtedly, as Thompson has stated, Christie's novels (and those of many of her contemporaries) are marked by their 'valorization of middle- and upper-middle-class society and mores, her resolute individualism, her nostalgia for an Edwardian type of domesticity, and her remarkable exclusion of social conflict' (129; also see Symons 104). However, broadening the range of authors under consideration and paying considerable attention to the novels of Gladys Mitchell, who has been unjustly neglected, helps uncover the golden age crime novel as a site in which politics and social conflict are approached both implicitly and explicitly. Using mass narratives of true crime and the often vigorous debates they generated as a starting point for assessing the ways in which criminality, responsibility and social deviance were conceived of during the interwar years, the relationship between high court, legal and medical debates on these issues and popular crime narratives can be revealed.

Many critics have drawn attention to the importance of bourgeois legal structures – in particular laws dealing with property and inheritance – in golden crime fiction (see Porter 120-21; Mandel 28-9). Countless novels deal with the transference of wealth and its related documentation, and to this extent they are hegemonic in that they uphold bourgeois primogeniture and the rule of law. Crime fiction is also concerned with the treatment of criminals, including the legal process following arrest, what takes place at trial and the assessment of what crimes have actually been committed. It is well known that crime fiction has its origins in public digests of criminal trials published in the late eighteenth century *Newgate Calendar* (Knight's history of this development in *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000* is particularly thorough). Ernst Bloch has also linked the rise of modern, investigative crime fiction to the juridical developments taking place from the mid-eighteenth century. 'Because the *trial by evidence demanded* that evidence be

sufficient for both the initial arrest warrant and the trial' he states, 'criminal investigations arose with the detective in the foreground' (italics in original, Bloch 246-47). Crime fiction arose at a moment when testable empirical data – footprints, alibis, material signs and so forth – was becoming more central to convictions than the old emphasis upon moral character and possible motivation. Reflecting upon the effects of this development in the mid-nineteenth century, in *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* Ronald R. Thomas charts how the literary detective rises as a figure in command of new technologies and adept in the use of nascent forensics. The legal demand for such verification described by Bloch suggests the genealogy of the tropes noted by Thomas, as evidence gathering derives from a legal process demanding corroboration, verifiable testimony and material proof. Nonetheless, the expectation of trial is not always present in narratives which demand such corroboration – Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, for example, often do not feature an illegal offence at all. In "A Case of Identity" for example, a minor heiress's stepfather approaches her in a disguise, inspires her love and trust, and then pretends to have been kidnapped. The stepfather's intention is to preoccupy her with mourning for the imaginary, missing lover, so that she does not fall in love with and marry another man, which would mean losing the income that was being spent upon her upkeep in the family home. Although immoral, the stepfather's emotional fraud and the naïve girl's detention do not, according to Holmes, transgress any written laws, and the perpetrator receives the detective's scorn, but nothing more.

Some critics have noted parallels between Conan Doyle's moralising dénouements and golden age crime novels. Knight, for example, states that golden age novels are concerned more with ritual unveiling than successful prosecution: 'they will be revealed by the detective; possibly forced to confess; but they will not be punished … The knowledge that explains the puzzle seems a sufficient ending to a classic mystery' (*Crime Fiction* 88). On the contrary, golden age crime novels have a considerably more palpable expectation of legal intervention than this. Frequently, the detective conceals their solution for a large part of the novel until adequate evidence can

be gained, or sets a trap for the killer in order to assure that conclusive proof can be gathered. The issue of whether a case will be able to stand up in court is essential in golden age fiction, especially in those numerous novels in which outré, complex and highly unlikely crimes take place. Inquests are staged, innocent people are incriminated, arrested, and occasionally convicted on the basis of falsified evidence, as is the premise of Sayers' first Harriet Vane and Peter Wimsey novel, *Strong Poison* (1930). The expectations and the demands of the legal system, and the necessity that a just resolution concludes the novel, are more than an afterthought: they are both a narrative and an ethical demand.

Indeed, ethical critique constitutes a significant and often unremarked aspect of golden age crime fiction's encounter with the law. This can be seen in Mitchell's *When Last I Died* (1938), which confronts the psychological classification and institutionalisation of child offenders (discussed in chapter three), and in novels like Brand's *Green for Danger* (1945) and Mitchell's *St Peter's Finger* (1938), which show up the cracks in the law's understanding of criminal insanity (the focus of chapter two). In the cases covered in these novels, the law is able to offer only an incomplete, and therefore flawed, account of crime, which the crime novel complicates and expands upon. The position adopted in these texts is, then, obstinate and adverse: as Susan Rowland has stated, the golden age crime novel 'crucially supplements the culturally authoritative texts of the law' (17); it tells stories the law cannot, or will not tell. Criminality is recognised as more complex and nuanced than the unambiguous language of law can express.

In Rowland's reading, crime fiction attends to this ellipsis, becoming 'the *other* of the powers of legal institutions to represent crime to a culture' (Rowland's italics, 17). The law and the legal process is, to Rowland, structurally and culturally gendered as masculine, meaning that the crime narrative as *other* is 'structurally gendered as feminine' (16). The binary of mad and sane (which is itself not entirely severable from the binary of feminine/masculine) is also discernible in the operation of the golden age crime narrative, and is crucial to the form's structural placement in regards to the law.

Rowland's argument is situated in the context of changing roles for women in the interwar years, and so too did this period see a contest over the role of psychology within the law. Debates between the proponents of competing psychological disciplines meant that the law was always implicitly or publically under attack by those who disagreed with the form of psychology upon which it was based. The unambiguous language used to define criminal responsibility was attacked prior to and during the period by psychologists who saw it as reductive, outdated, and open to misinterpretation. Changes to the law, especially in response to 'faddish' psychological doctrines, were seen by many jurists as subversive. Even worse, the undecidibility of legal texts opened up the threatening possibility that decisions may be made not on an objective basis, but according to the preferences, perhaps even the unconscious wishes (a most threatening idea) of those invested with legal power. Crime fiction is then indeed a supplement to the law, not only because it is structurally feminine, but because it occupies a position in which insanity is not containable, in which psychological insights into unconscious and irrational actions are accepted as fact, and in which the reasonable, objective ethics of the law are deeply suspect. The novels under consideration in this study are, then, in spite of their genre's classic demand for organising order from chaos, structurally diagnosable as mad.

The suspicion that the law cannot contain the irrational is central to Agatha Christie's novel, *And Then There Were None* (1939). A masterpiece of pared-down horror, it concerns ten characters, all of whom have committed murder, who are tricked into attending a party on an island from which none will leave alive. The characters' perceptions of their crimes range from indifference, a belief in having taken the moral high-ground, rationalisation, cold-blooded satisfaction and hysterical guilt. A nurse who allowed a child to die in her care, a general who sent his wife's lover (a soldier) on a fatal mission, a surgeon whose drinking lead to the death of a patient, and a policeman who accepted a bribe to convict an innocent man, are all included in the cast. As well as offering a critique of the perverse possibilities of power, *And Then There Were None* exemplifies the use of the crime novel as a potent medium in which to negotiate

concerns over public policy and social arrangements. Members of the police, the army, medics, the leisured middle class and the indulgent upper classes (as well as a pair of working class schemers) are all responsible for crimes they committed whilst exploiting a position of power. But the position of power that comes under greatest scrutiny in the novel is that of judge, the final adjudicator of law and punishment which, until 1969, included the death penalty for murder. Christie's character, Mr Justice Lawrence John Wargrave, is described as a hanging judge because of his predilection for advising the jury to pass the death penalty in murder trials, even in cases in which the guilt of the defendant is in doubt. Occupying yet another position of power above and beyond accusations of murder, the judge represents both the subjective kernel located at the heart of the myth of an objective law, and a particularly demonic form of delusion. As Rowland states, 'the body of written laws ... are those documents supposed unambiguously to assign criminal status to their own otherness: that which transgresses or is excluded by them' (17). In positioning the *other*, the mad, subjective and criminal, within the law itself via its emissary – the judge – and unleashing that emissary in an allegorical, legal microcosm – the uncanny automatic-punishment machine that is the novel's inescapable island – Christie suggests that it is impossible to exclude transgressive elements from society through the process of the law, or to use the law to assign criminal status to otherness. These possibilities pervade the social body, in which the law is included: *otherness* is already within, and the division between mad and sane, killer and innocent, becomes less clear.

The conservatism of Christie has been discussed by numerous scholars, while transgressions of gender and bodily borders cited by Rowland, Plain, Munt, and assaults on class by Light, suggest ways of moving outside of the automatic dismissal of Christie and her contemporaries as merely invested in the perpetuation of the status quo. The new and more complex ways of imagining the forms that justice and the legal process could take, proposed explicitly in certain novels and felt implicitly in others, can also be seen as an constituting an ethical dimension that makes problematic accusations of

conservatism. This is a premise, however, that has been previously dismissed by scholars, for example Thompson, who states;

> the detective figure's identification of the murderer has the ideological effect of extirpating the diseased agent (the murderer) and thereby confirming the body politic in its sense of its own collective moral and political decency. This is because Christie's murderers either are actuated by moral failure (greed, lust, avarice, etc., sins that are the result of consciously made decisions), or else commit their crimes because of mental derangement. In any case, none of these crimes call into question the justice of the current social and economic arrangements characteristic of her settings. (132)

Imagining, as Thompson tries to do, a crime fiction derived from Marxist theory, where crimes are explored through an analysis of the economic situation of the perpetrator and their particular location within a superstructure in which the exercise of consciously made decisions is always suspect, will not get us far with Christie's fiction. To Christie, moral failure is a case of individual failure – a 'weakness' according to Knight (*Form and Ideology* 116) – and while sympathy is expressed in certain novels for characters who find themselves in awkward financial positions, they are still considered as autonomous agents, responsible for their crimes.

The exception is, of course, in cases where the killer is mentally disturbed. Coincident with the rise of golden age crime fiction was an exacerbation of accounts of selfhood which sought to wrest agency away from the thinking and perceiving subject and locate it in the embodied mind. This development needs to be traced, and given proper attention next to the other transformative ideas of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which unseated the unitary, bourgeois self from its primacy as director of action and intention. Thompson looks specifically at Karl Marx and Freud's deconstructive accounts of identity to suggest reasons for the explosion of divided identities, uncertain selves and unknowable others in golden crime fiction (130). According to Thompson, Marx's account of the shaping of individual subjectivity by economic circumstances, along with the estranging effect of false-consciousness (which

exposed the historic forces that shaped one's closest held values and desires), combined with Freud's radical and unsettling account of the unconscious and the divided ego, to shape the crime narrative. This is due both to their general pervasiveness as intellectual premises, and their enormous influence upon literary modernism. As Thompson states: 'many of these tenets became accepted facts of experimental modernism, and it is one measure of their ubiquity that the questioning of identity should become a convention in a popular genre such as the formal English novel of detection' (130).

Incidental to the rise of experimental modernism, British law and psychology were becoming increasingly concerned with questions of agency and self-knowledge. While 'high' literature meditated upon the instability of identity, the phenomenology of consciousness and the concealed deviance or multiplicity of selfhood, British law and medicine were both attempting to categorise and comprehend conditions which affected memory, consciousness and physical action. Epilepsy and automatism, while occupying uncertain positions in law, incited anxieties about the self and its unknown contents and desires which paralleled the concerns of modernist literature. Representations of these psychological conditions in crime fiction are shaped by press coverage of automatic killings (see chapter four), but so too do they engage with modernist explorations of selfhood, as well as critically respond to modernist fears (to be discussed in chapter five). Narrative and syntactical similarities in descriptions of the recording and perceiving consciousness and the synthesising, irrational unconscious are found in both seemingly opposed literary forms, calling for more focused intertextual analysis of crime fiction in relation to modernist writing (again, see chapter 5). The employment of innovative techniques and narrative modes demonstrates the spread of modernist themes and approaches outside of the 'high' literary canon in ways that test the boundaries of the canon itself. More importantly within the long tradition of detective writing, instances of irrational and intuitive detection counter crime fiction's classic demand for rationalism and the conflation of power with knowledge which defines the masculine, scientific detective of the pre-golden age (see Thompson 45).

Emotional pathologies and intellectual disabilities limit responsibility and autonomy, even impairing the attainment of selfhood for criminals in golden age crime fiction. In many novels, a problematic area is opened between the self-determined or the biologically determined self and between rational and constrained choice, undermining exactly the kind of individualism that critics like Thompson and Knight have seen as ideologically inseparable from the whodunit. During the interwar period, law and psychology were frequently in opposition over the relationship between responsibility and madness, and regarding the benefits of punishment or therapy. Crime fiction provides unique insight into this history, at the same time as it demands that things be otherwise in ways that contradict dominant associations of the form with containment. As many novels demonstrate, the capture of the criminal can mark the beginning, not the end, of an uncontainable problem.

Theories of Mind

Golden age crime writing is pervaded by psychological debates, drawing from popular spiritualist pseudo-sciences, evolutionary psychology, neurology, and psychoanalysis in its representations of insane killers and psychologically astute detectives. Understandings of free will and determination – either self-determination, or determination by sources outside of one's control – are central to the meaning and to the ideological commitments of the detective story. Repeatedly, the ethical value placed upon punishment at a golden age novel's dénouement is informed by contemporary psychological debates, and competing psychological practitioners' understandings of autonomy, responsibility, and choice. In the immediate pre-war period and leading into the interwar years, psychological discourses provided a crucial context for drawing out the meaning of interactions between the detective and the criminal, the transgressor, and the social group in the golden age form.

As deviations from social norms, insanity and criminality are a feature of every social history, although the origin and nature of each has been accounted for in ways as diverse as culture itself. On the contrary, psychology has a unique historic moment of emergence; according to David J. Murray, the word psychology 'was hardly known in the English-speaking world' before the 1850s (120). Explorations of human understanding, emotion, sensation, and morality pre-date the emergence of psychology as a discipline in science, theology, literature, and in philosophical debates concerning human nature, free will and the subtleties of the relation between mind and body. During the nineteenth century, psychology emerged from these multiple sources as a discrete discipline. The age-old mind-body problem was re-articulated according to new understandings of nervous energy and brain localisation, while the laying of a groundwork for a 'science of human nature' (Leahey 137) took place in the move from rationalism to empiricism, the replacement of speculative metaphysics with introspective psychology, and the removal of the once-central God in many thought systems.

Neurological research grounded in dissection and anatomical experimentation, philosophical discussion of the associative faculties of the mind, and pseudo-scientific practices accompanied by extravagant spiritualism all form the early nineteenth century context for the development of psychology. From the outset, psychology was poised between conflicting rational and metaphysical demands: both to justify itself as an empirical science of human nature, and to evoke a sense of the fantastic and religious to fill the spiritual vacuum left by growing secularism and, after 1859, the rise of evolutionary science. The immense popularity of practices like Mesmerism – established by Franz Anton Mesmer in France in the 1760s – which employed hypnosis as a therapeutic practice and exploited research into animal electricity and nerve energy to assert the outlandish theory of animal magnetism, ensured that psychology had both occult and charlatan associations from its earliest days. These associations were not easily shaken off, as can be seen in much golden age crime writing. Margery Allingham, for example, fuses psychoanalytic jargon with ritual and magic in many of her novels, while in Gladys Mitchell's writing, psychological theories and magic are mutually supportive, best seen in *Tom Brown's Body* when her psychoanalytic detective Mrs Bradley gets locked into a battle of arts with a practicing witch. Psychoanalysis demands a compelling personality to practice it, and magical properties are associated with both the skills and the practitioner. As well as to the contemporary flourishing of Spiritualist culture and the resurgence of occult societies such as the Golden Dawn, it is to an older history of quasi-scientific psychological researches that golden age authors often refer in their representations of theories of mind.

The changing reception of phrenology throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries exemplifies the interaction of the rational and the irrational, the positivistic and the qualitative, in the history of psychology. The founder of the system, F.J. Gall, asserted in works produced between 1796 and 1819, that the brain was the physical organ of mental activity and nervous impulses. The brain was not homogeneous matter, but the moral and psychological faculties had corresponding organs each located on its surface, which could be investigated by examination of the shapes and contours of the

cranium. Although the conclusiveness of the method and the science behind the system were contested, phrenology became enormously popular. Specific organs were claimed to manage functions of mind ranging from 'Attachment, Propensity to oppose, Combativeness, Propensity to injure or Destructiveness' (Morgan 19). Studies such as James Brown's 1869 *Phrenology and its Application* included figures demonstrating the difference in head shape between a philosopher and a parricide (see plate 9), the latter of whom exhibited a flatter skull due to paltry development of particular moral and intellectual faculties.

It is demonstrations like this that give the impression that phrenology was a deterministic system, but it was equally common for its practitioners to assert that various parts of the brain could be manipulated and developed as a means of self-improvement. As Nicholas Morgan, writing in 1871, asserted, 'phrenology does not teach that particular actions can be predicted, nor does it teach that any person must necessarily act in a certain manner' (8). The criminally minded could be spotted by features like 'a very low and retreating brow' which demonstrated 'meanness and lack of judgement' (Morgan 14), but there was always the hope, however small, that application could help develop those organs and alter both the shape of the cranium and the character of the individual. This was part of phrenology's appeal. As well as being immediately comprehensible, it could be readily applied to a range of directive and disciplinary practices from education to discipline, character analysis and aptitude testing..

During the nineteenth century, more sophisticated scientific accounts of localisation in the functions of the brain were advanced, but nonetheless phrenology persisted as what Clarke and Jacyna have called a 'trace element' in many of the major intellectual, scientific and discursive traditions of Victorian society (240). It formed an important antecedent to both Social Darwinism and eugenics, with its combined emphasis upon the material manifestation of psychological and moral characteristics, and upon the hereditary transmission of such characteristics. At the turn of the twentieth century, phrenology enjoyed a minor revival in London (see Hollander), and it continued

to be practised with gusto in North America, where the *American Phrenological Journal* (established in 1840) continued to be published until 1911. Ideas derived from phrenology – both as a means of developing self-determination and, contrarily, as a determining science – were still active in criminological writings in the interwar years and in popular accounts of criminality, as shall be seen.

The Brain and Nervous System

It was phrenology that first drew significant attention to the brain as an object of study in the understanding of character and mental faculty. In attempts to clarify or overhaul Gall's premises, physiologists developed experimental methods for analysing the brain and its functions, with specific attention to the cerebral hemispheres and the cerebral cortex, and to the nature of nerve impulses and reflexes. The major advancement from Gall's system was the discovery of the centrality of the nervous system – the motor and sensory nerves. The view of the brain as a complex, responsive system, 'a complex reflex machine,' (Leahey 169) was, in 1870, made more precise by the disclosure that electronic currents could be applied to areas of the brain to stimulate movement in the corresponding motor nerves. Animal electricity had been established by Luigi Galvini in 1791 (see Clarke and Jacyna 157), but the discovery of the direct relationship between cerebrum and specific nerves lead to geographies of the brain and body which became the primary paradigm of physiological psychology.

In this paradigm, madness was treated as a disease of bodily machinery, not a weakness of the will or an imbalance in an immaterial soul. The nervous system and brain were looked to on a microscopic level as the sites of disease. Writing in the 1870s, psychiatrist and pioneering asylum manager Henry Maudsley stated:

> No one now-a-days who is engaged in the treatment of mental disease doubts that he has to do with the disordered function of a bodily organ – of the brain. … Insanity is, in fact … a disorder of the supreme nerve-centres of the brain – the special organs of the mind – producing derangement of thought, feeling and action. (*Responsibility in Mental Disease* 15)

Disorders in the 'nerve element' (ibid. 17) were at the root of insanity: over-stimulation or damage to that area of the organism could bring about insanity, while repose and other nerve-cures had the potential to affect a cure. This paradigm of sympathetic physiology saw the body as a commonwealth and the brain as a switchboard passing messages through the nervous system like – as it is put in a 1920s introduction to neurology – 'the telephone exchange of a great city. The girls and their switchboards are the centres, the ingoing wires are the sensory nerves, the outgoing wires are the motor nerves' (Fraser-Harris 4).

Writing in *Neurology and Modernity* (2010), Laura Salisbury and Andrew Shail explore the neurological paradigm of embodied subjectivity, which they see as inseparable from the modern experience of selfhood. Tethering their analysis to Charles Baudelaire's diagnosis of modernity's influence upon the artist in *The Painter of Modern Life* (1859-60), Salisbury and Shail note that Baudelaire defines the experience of the modern as intensified stimulation from the external world, which corresponds in exhausting and invigorating ways with the interiority of a modern subject who is decidedly nervous. '[E]very sublime thought is accompanied by a more or less vigorous nervous impulse that reverberates in the cortex,' Baudelaire states (qtd. 398). As Salisbury and Shail point out, Baudelaire describes an artist who 'translates the sensations of the world into a body that vibrates and responds in sympathy with it, according to a model of nervous force' (2). Describing a culture which understood experience as consisting of a responsive relationship between external stimulus and internal nervous constitution, the authors detail various ways in which nervous activity underpins characterisation in late-Victorian and Edwardian popular fiction. Strong emotion is accompanied by nervous strain, while those with stronger, better exercised and better 'fed' nerves are more likely to respond practically and reasonably to external events, to have energetic and optimistic natures, and to experience good physical health (3-5). The symbiotic relationship between the nervous system and subjectivity represented in modern, popular writing is undeniably persistent, and innumerable instances in golden age crime novels support the examples cited by Salisbury and Shail,

from the commonplace worry that a character's nerves will not take the shock of the crime, to attempts to drive someone to death or madness through over-stimulating their nerves. The popularity of nerve restoration tonics for fraught nerves and other psychological instabilities is even satirised in Dorothy L. Sayers' *Murder Must Advertise* (1933), in which advertisements for these cure all stimulants are exploited to communicate information about drop-off points to illegal drug traffickers, giving a clear sense of Sayers' attitude to both the over-the-counter remedies and the intellectually incapacitating activities of marketing agencies. Throughout the interwar years, and in spite of all the sensation and fascination of psychoanalysis, the neurological view of emotion and consciousness as an affect or symptom of the body's nervous machinery remained pervasive in mainstream thought.

Darwin and Darwinisms

Charles Darwin was not the first thinker to draw attention to generational alteration in species: Jean Baptiste Lamarck's romantic-naturalistic theory of the innate drive of species to perfect themselves as new habits are developed and a useless organ 'shrinks and wastes little by little' (Lamarck 47) in response to changing environments was an important early nineteenth century antecedent; so too was Thomas Malthus' 1798 "An Essay on the Principle of Population" in which population growth is linked to available resources (see Malthus, passim). Nonetheless, Charles Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) heralded a revolution in nineteenth-century scientific and intellectual thought. In it, Darwin contends that 'numerous, slight and diversified variations' ("The Descent of Man" 222) occur naturally within species. In the 'universal struggle for life,' (ibid., 108) successful variations are more likely to breed, thus passing on their unique features to their offspring, while less successful variations die out. The diversity of world environments accounted for the diversity of nature, although the principle upon which variation was based was a simple one: difference between species was 'the result of a few mechanical principles operating over millions of years' (Leahey 153).

The lengthy process of evolution involved not only the development of animals' physiques, but their behaviour too: 'instinctive behaviour also evolved – creatures that spontaneously showed certain behaviour patterns that led to successful feeding or breeding would survive' (Murray 222). Innate aspects of animal behaviour were acquired out of multiple compounded tendencies to act in certain ways, becoming more complex as the species evolved. In human evolution, the case would subsequently be made that different races had acquired different mental and intellectual capacities, and different instincts. In *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin asserts that differences 'between the highest men of the highest races and the lowest savages, are connected by the finest gradations. Therefore it is possible that they might pass and be developed into each other' ("The Descent of Man" 214). Although his intention was to argue that humans shared a number of instincts and emotional states with animals rather than to taxonomise human species, discussions of the social instincts, the development of will in relation to cultural demands and the evolution of intellectual powers all paved the way for the psychology of adaptation.

Social Darwinism

As the historian J.M. Roberts asserts, during the late nineteenth century, 'Darwinian – or misrepresentations of Darwinian – ideas were imported into social and political thinking with great effect' (179). Psychology and criminology are no exception. Herbert Spencer was a great promoter of Social Darwinism, arguing that the principle of the survival of the fittest be allowed to fulfil itself in social life, and that '[g]overnment should leave the cosmic process alone, for it will perfect humanity by the selection of the fittest' (qtd. in Leahey 259). The 'weak' should be allowed to perish for the good of the species, as 'all reform was seen as tampering with nature's laws' (ibid.).

As well as promoting his conservative, *laissez faire* program, Spencer proposed that learning and associations built up throughout an individual's lifetime constituted the basis of instinct. This became a part of the genetic constitution of a species, and could be inherited as an acquired characteristic which would contribute to the teleological

evolution of that species or subspecies. According to Spencer, the 'European inherits from twenty to thirty cubic inches more brain than the Papuan,' meaning that 'civilised man has also a more complex or heterogeneous nervous system than the uncivilised man' (*Illustrations of Universal Progress* 11). Ostensible intellectual inequalities between ethnic groups were seen as physically manifested at the cerebral level, and an ameliorative evolution postulated in which richness of association, complexity of the nervous system, and high brain mass were assumed to distinguish civilised Europeans from primitive races. A hierarchy was established in which 'savage' groups were claimed to be representative of the infancy of the supposedly more intellectually, emotionally and physically advanced, civilized Westerners. The vision of social evolution as a hierarchical continuum shaped anthropological tracts, scientific treatises and the organisation of museum exhibits, which in institutions such as the Horniman Museum in South London were arranged to show the transition from primitive designs to more civilised forms ("Centenary Gallery").

As the inhibition of savage instincts was seen as a marker of civilisation and higher mental evolution, the loss of will concomitant with insanity seemed to place the insane on the same evolutionary level as so-called savages. An ulterior discourse to ameliorative-evolution developed in which madness and criminality were accounted for as negative evolution – degeneration. Links were made between insanity and mental defect, and the lower mental evolution of uncivilised humanity and non-European races. Convinced that all madness was hereditary, medical practitioners like Henry Maudsley transformed the mid-nineteenth century role of psychiatry from one of moral care, guidance and discipline to one of observation, taxonomisation and experimentation: 'They insisted that insanity had a physical cause that could be discovered by a sophisticated medical practice' according to Elaine Showalter (*Female Malady* 104). As Maudsley states in *Responsibility in Mental Disease* (1874), 'no one can elude, were he able to attempt it, the tyranny of his organization,' for a defect

> will run on in the stream of family descent, sometimes appearing on the surface, sometimes hidden beneath it, until, on the one hand, it is either

> neutralized by the beneficial influences of wise intermarriages, or, on the other hand, reaches a pathological evolution which entails the decay and extinction of the family. (22)

Such catastrophes could be averted if people were cautious about heredity, paid attention to natural laws and to the breeding of their family. Because criminals and lunatics are determined and do not appear by accident, if humanity was to remain at 'the head of nature,' a person had to become 'the conscious farmer of his destiny' (*Responsibility* 24).

In this view, the insane were designated as evolutionary misfits, the 'distortion of humanity' (*Responsibility* 4). Although Maudsley criticised past societies, including supposedly civilised ones, for excluding the insane like 'a diseased member that is unfitted for the natural functions of its kind,' (*Responsibility* 5) he nonetheless saw the psychiatrist's role as recognising the signs of manifest or latent insanity and weeding out the sufferers. Poverty was often seen as a consequence of innate insanity, in conflict with philanthropic or Marxist accounts which saw the misery of impoverishment or the alienation of labour at the root of mental distress. The optimistic, if patronising, moral management approach which had led to the creation of modern, Utilitarian, quasi-domestic asylums in the mid-nineteenth century, also went into decline:

> While the moral managers had hoped that the insane poor could be cured, the Darwinians thought that they could only be segregated; in the long run, physicians hinted, their numbers could be reduced through stricter immigration and selective breeding. (Showalter, *Female Malady* 108)

The pessimistic determinism which marked these accounts was redoubled with regards to criminality. Insanity was connected to crime, and both were pilloried as the markers and outcomes of degeneration. From the 1870s onwards, psychiatrists and criminologists frequently discussed criminality as a form of insanity and as such a form of inheritance, rather than a sin or moral failing, or in evolutionary terms, as a 'disorder of the process of adjusting the self to the circumstances, and that it is primarily manifested in disorder, not of the mind, but of conduct' (Mercier, *Crime and Insanity* 32).

The most notorious proponent of the classifications of moral insanity and born criminality, which were pervasive in psychiatric writings of the *fin de siècle*, was Cesar Lombroso. A criminal anthropologist, Lombroso asserted that physical abnormalities both marked and determined the criminal: 'the antisocial tendencies of criminals are the result of their physical and psychic organisation, which differs essentially from that of normal individuals,' (Ferrero 5). Using mug-shots and measurements of criminals, Lombroso claimed to have established that human character could be assessed by attention to facial expressions and other physical features, attitudes and gestures.

Another turn of the century proponent of criminal positivism was Sir Francis Galton. Like Lombroso, Galton used portraiture to exemplify his claims, but rather than finding perfect examples of a criminal type, he composed composite photographs. Multiple images of similar types were superimposed upon one another in order to bring out 'the common physiognomic denominator of all the faces' (Blacker 46). According to Galton, composites allowed one to appreciate fully 'the degradation of their expressions,' and the regularity of human 'sub-types' including both criminals and the insane (ibid. 47). Obviously, these photographic researches were based on the assumption that character, morality and psychology were physically manifested and as such pre-determined. In a similar vein, Galton used statistical research to isolate and chart psychological, intellectual, moral and physical trends and differences in a population. Differences meant variation, and its study could lead to an understanding of evolutionary change, according to Galton. The programme Galton developed from these researches was named eugenics, which he defined as 'the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also those that develop them to the utmost advantages' ("Eugenics" 1). For the most part, eugenics involved the '[s]ystematic collection of facts' ("Eugenics" 4) concerning birth rates, the conditions under which families thrive, the density of noteworthy individuals in a society. and occurrences of so-called undesirables – be they criminals or the insane – who were ill-fitted for social life due to faulty adaptation. Galton's recommendation was that the whole of the social field, both present and historical, be submitted to measurement,

taxonomisation and scrutiny, and the results be turned into a proactive social project to improve the human race. Means of tweaking the race and factoring out undesirables included the banning of unsuitable marriages ("Eugenics" 5), encouraging individuals to keep family pedigrees to make it easier to improve their stock, providing low rent houses for 'promising young couples' (*Essays in Eugenics* 32) and the segregation of the unfit. Galton claimed to be inspired by an ethical, even religious conviction that it was humanity's responsibility to breed selectively, weeding out undesirable traits and propagating desirable ones, for the good of European races ("Eugenics" 5).

The appalling consequences of eugenics were realised in the genocide of Jews, Serbs, Slavs and Roma committed by Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945. As well as ethnic and racial persecution, those suffering from mental defects or exhibiting 'anti-social' behaviour were tortured and murdered in concentration camps alongside other 'undesirables', who included homosexuals and ideological dissidents (see Lifton 65; 153). The 'cleansing' of intellectually and physically 'unsound' individuals, including those suffering from epilepsy, schizophrenia, physical deformities, genetic conditions such as Down's syndrome and mental disabilities by the Nazi regime forms a devastating parallel with the moves for racial hygiene through sterilisation then popular in a number of Western countries, including the United States. In Nazi Germany, the T4 program, as it became known after the war, claimed moral and political justification throughout the 1930s, masquerading as both economically rational – reducing the costs of care to the state – and ethical, with the murder of deformed children being justified according to the perverted rhetoric of 'euthanasia' and 'mercy killing' (Lifton 48; 50).

Objections to eugenics on ethical grounds were, unfortunately, not chief amongst the first responses to Galton in British psychology at the turn of the twentieth century; instead, the practicality of implementing eugenics was hotly debated. Maudsley, while sharing Galton's interest in the role of inheritance in psychology and the freak occurrences of both geniuses and mental defects in normal families, doubted whether the subtler traits of humans could be selectively bred in the same way as the traits of

animals. More was at play in human character, Maudsley asserted in response to Galton, than could be affected by factors as yet unregistered by science:

> the corpuscles, atoms, electrons, or whatever else there may be [are] subjected to subtle influences of mind and body during their formations and combinations of which we hardly realize the importance. ("Discussion: By Dr Maudsley" 8)

The criminal psychiatrist Mercier agreed with Maudsley, asserting that the passing of character from parent to child was completely unpredictable, making it 'doubtful if moral traits are hereditary' ("Discussion" 8). In spite of contemporary objections, Galton's theories had profound implications in the early twentieth century. Its affects were felt in the study of disease, intelligence and the allocation of state funding in sociology and anthropology. In 1905, a Francis Galton Research Fellowship was established at the University of London, which encouraged research on the compilation of biographies of gifted, capable families and below average families, as well as 'the families of persons in asylums of all kinds, hospitals and prisons' ("National Eugenics" 440). Research was conducted on how state intervention impacted upon criminals, because '[p]ublic opinion is beginning to regard with favour the project of a prolonged segregation of habitual criminals for the purpose of restricting their opportunities for (1) continuing their depredations, and (2) producing low-class offspring' (ibid. 441). Galton's influence propagated the view that criminality, like insanity, was both innate and inheritable. Eugenics could explain how both could be guarded against and reduced.

The popularity of eugenics was even greater in North America than in Britain. Spencer promoted a *laissez-faire* policy in the United States, but many American psychologists took to a proactive eugenics project instead, often in excess of what Galton suggested: 'Galton had no plans for the unfit, only aiming to encourage the multiplication of the fit. Americans took the opposite course, doing little to marry the fit, but trying to keep the unfit from reproducing,' according to Leahey (259). The development of the Stanford-Binet Test – based on the French Binet-Simon *intelligence quotient* (I.Q.) test – by Lewis Terman in the early 1910s, and its rigorous

implementation in state institutions from prisons to schools and army barracks, attests to the desire of the USA's psychological establishment for a reliable mechanism for weeding out undesirables. Through intelligence testing, it was ostensibly proven that there was a strong link between insanity, low intelligence and criminality. The feeble-minded were also often associated with the criminally minded, as they innately lacked the necessary intelligence to recognise that crime was immoral, as well as the will to restrain themselves from immoral acts.

The influence of adaptive psychologies on golden age crime fiction has occasioned little discussion in scholarship. Although Ronald R. Thomas has explored their treatment in *fin de siècle* crime writing (Conan Doyle's in particular), their appearance in golden age crime has been little remarked upon, and therefore will receive close attention in chapter three, 'Born Criminals'. In the novels studied there, ideas about criminal type informed by adaptive psychologies are involved in both false and true solutions, demonstrating how psychological understanding penetrated to the heart of the mystery and shaped readers' understandings of character types. In countless other novels, ideas about born criminality lurk behind social fears and prejudices.. In Dorothy L. Sayers *Gaudy Night* (1935), for example, an American eugenics enthusiast pops up at inopportune moments and tries to convince Sayers' hero and heroine to sign up to a cause which is represented as both comical, fanatical and offensive. This side note in a larger work is just one example of how ideas associated with eugenics are ever-present in golden age crime fiction. Alison Light has argued that in Christie's novels, the appearance of these ideas is more oblique and often intermingled with Freudian ideas: the 'unconscious is seen in an almost Darwinian light as the repository for purely anti-social desires of an unambiguously destructive kind, which represent traces of 'savagery' in the individual, a racial and social past which must be overcome and survived' (104). As shall be seen, representations of criminals in detective fiction are informed both implicitly and explicitly by notions of innate dispositions, mental inheritance and the legacy of unsuitable couplings.

Adaptive Psychology and the Nervous System

William James' *Principles of Psychology* marked an important stage in the development of academic psychology as a discrete discipline. Published in 1890, James' *Principles* fused introspection and the recognition of emotion as a valid object of study with physiological research into the brain and central nervous system. With its understanding of the interdependence of mind and body and its central image of the nervous system as a 'great computating switch-board at a central telephone station,' (26) *Principles* remained a respected psychological source book throughout the interwar years. In a break from the mind-body dualism of Cartesian thought systems, James asserted that mind should no longer be considered as having unique spiritual qualities, but as subject to the same natural laws as the body. Consciousness had its basis in physiological processes, meaning that with empirical exploration, the material causes of mental phenomenon could be isolated and understood. James was, then, primarily a psychologist of adaptation, but one with a much more holistic and comprehensive sense of how the body responds to its environment. He asserts that

> the essence of mental life and of bodily life are one, namely, "the adjustment of inner to outer relations." Such a formula is vagueness incarnate; but … it takes into account the fact that minds inhabit environments which act on them and on which they in turn react; … in short, it takes mind in the midst of all its concrete relations. (6)

The demands of the social and natural environment, to James, provide the framework for human mental life. Both inner psychic life and the physical mind are formed in relation to external demands. However, James also asserts that the motivating forces of a reasoning, judging will lay behind human thought and activity. The relationship between the outside world and the will – the mind – should be the remit of psychology.

The question – what is the mind, and what is its relationship with the body? – is core to the *Principles*. James begins the work by dismissing spiritualist psychologies, in which the breadth of mental phenomena, including memory, desires, judgements and ideas, are attributed to 'a simple entity, the personal Soul' (1). The notion of the

transcendent soul, James asserts, insufficiently accounts for the mechanical properties of the central nervous system and the material qualities of the brain. In his development of an embodied psychological theory, James postulates a sympathetic nervous system and a psychology constitutively focused upon brain physiology and bodily processes: '*no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change*,' (5) he states.[1] The constitution of the hemispheres, motor-discharges which instigate and accompany acts, and the neural pathways created and maintained in a reflexive loop between brain and muscle were, according to James, the proper object of psychological study. Identity and character were not purely determined by inborn qualities, but formed throughout the individual's lifetime in a responsive relationship between body and environment, as continual activity through the sensory and motor nerves linked impression to motion, carving deeper channels in certain parts, and forming ever more complex manifestations of consciousness: 'an endless consequent increase in the possibilities of behaviour on the creature's part' (26).

In much golden age crime fiction, the difference between unconscious and automatic acts is of considerable importance. In interwar legal debates over whether a criminal is an author of an act, or whether a guilty mind is a necessary accompaniment to guilt, especially in cases of insanity, James' writings form an important point of reference. Of central concern is the question of choice, will and volition, which James approaches from a theological, moral standpoint as well as from a biological one. Although he asserts that movements in mind are necessarily accompanied by bodily activity, he does not agree that each feeling, 'is only the correlate of some nerve-movement whose *cause* lay wholly in a previous nerve-movement.' (133). He distinguishes acts of mind from mere automatic and reflexive acts, because, '*actions ... as are done for an end, and show a choice of means, can be called indubitable expressions of Mind*' (11). James defines consciousness as '*a selecting agency*' (139), asserting that making choices as to how to achieve ends makes an act a definite product of Mind.

[1] All italicisations in quotations are James' own.

One interesting component of James' argument is his account of morality as a biological affect that is, to a certain degree, within the individual's control. He asserts that the will becomes less freely exercisable the more the neurological effects of repeated actions build up. Rather than discrete acts of will, basic movements such as walking and jumping are comparable to higher skills like playing music, because learning them involves developments in the brain, nerves and muscle. Changes may come about as a consequence of education, or of action performed originally as an act of will, and they are made possible by the early plasticity of the brain and its receptivity to impressions. If early actions create fresh neurological pathways, and subsequent actions cleave deeper into those neurological pathways, character eventually becomes calcified as a consequence of those same pathways being inevitably followed: 'the most complex habits … are, from the same point of view, nothing but *concatenated* discharges in the nerve-centres due to the presence there of systems of reflex paths' (107). In this way, morality becomes habitual, as the will has carved a sluice, 'a natural drainage channel' (108) which it is simultaneously deepening, making certain thoughts and moral choices irresistible.

In a curiously visionary section, James advises his readership not to commit private guilty acts because 'when a current has once traversed a path, it should traverse it more readily still a second time,' (109). If bad or useless acts and tendencies are allowed to become habits, the consequence is a diminishing of the will, which is, after all, only 'an aggregate of tendencies to act' which 'only becomes effectively ingrained in us in proportion to the uninterrupted frequency with which the actions actually occur' (125). Training out of habits is, to James, both a moral and a physical task, and the only means available to counteract the determining effects of a nurtured neural karma:

> We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. … Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. (127)

Adaptation and ethics, the body and the mind, co-exist in James' psychology, and it is striking to observe how alike is his final warning here to the recording unconscious as it was envisaged by Sigmund Freud.

Psychoanalysis

During the latter years of the nineteenth century, Social Darwinist and physiological accounts in which organic matter constituted and predetermined consciousness turned attention away from the immaterial and the psychic towards the physical. Psychoanalysis won back control of the mind over the body in the recognition of psychosomatic action, unconscious impulses, and the interactions between the mind and innate instincts, particularly the sexual instinct.

Freud's impact upon literary, intellectual, scientific and medical thought in 1920s Britain can in many respects be seen as a culmination of nineteenth-century traditions. Leahey has suggested that many of Freud's views on sexuality were 'thoroughly Victorian' (219): his presentation of female sexuality as 'a deeply repressed animal nature to be awakened by the right seducer' (ibid.) and his comparison between this buried nature and the proclivities of savage women had already been articulated in previous thought systems. The idea of sexual instinct or libido in Darwinian thought can be traced, as Leahey states, to 'a combination of Victorian morality and physics' (217), which shared metaphors of limited reserves of energy derived from thermodynamic physics, and the nerve stores found in physiology. Many of Freud's theories were inspired by explorations of the conflicting nature of desire and the mysterious origins of ideas from writers as varied as William Shakespeare, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Marcel Proust and the Classical tragedians. Nineteenth century philosophical, spiritual and literary writing was familiar with unconscious ideas, in Romantic poetry and spiritualism, which laid the way for understanding of alternate aspects of the mind, integral to the self but throwing up desires and inclinations contrary to reason, social morality or conscious dictates. William James wrote in the 1890s of the stream of thought, describing consciousness as 'a teeming multiplicity of objects and relations'

(224) and, in language that owes more to the Victorian literary trope of the dual self than Freud's understandings of complex and interrelated mental states, the 'subconscious personage' as an 'interior fraction of the subject's own natural mind' (228). The reality of these ulterior and supressed states of being is nonetheless assumed in James' scientific account, and formed the context for hypnotic experiments Freud was conducting in the 1890s on sufferers of hysteria: 'the buried feelings and thoughts proved now to exist in hysterical anaesthetics, in recipients of post-hypnotic suggestion, etc., themselves are part of *secondary* personal selves' as James wrote in 1890 (*Principles* 227)

Freud's major contribution was not, then, in proposing the existence of unconscious ideas, but in his hypothesis of a place in the mind called the unconscious: 'where ideas reside when they are not conscious and from which they can affect behaviour without our awareness' (Leahey 218). As well as proposing the existence of the dynamic unconscious, Freud announced a theory of the mind in which the sexual instinct was central to the development of the Ego, and in which the process of repression was a major factor in psychological development and mental pathology.

During the late 1890s and early 1910s, the 'lonely years,' as Freud termed them ("On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" 22), psychoanalytic theories were treated by many as objectionable and eccentric. The establishment of the Zurich Institute in 1911 marked the beginning of Freud's success on the Continent, while in Britain, Barbara Low and Ernest Jones were prominent amongst those who produced popular introductions to Freudian theory, defining how his work was received by the general reader. Although psychoanalysis was never recognised by the academic psychiatric establishment, which preferred behaviourism and psychologies of consciousness (see Leahey 216-7), and Freud's insights were never brought to bear in the courts of law, psychoanalysis was practiced by a network of analysts (see Danto, passim), and had manifold influences upon thought, writing and social life in interwar Britain.

Prior to conducting his own research, Freud worked with female hysterics at the clinic of Parisian doctor Jean-Martin Charcot in 1885 and 1886 ("On the History" 9). Charcot was renowned for having proposed a mentally and neurologically grounded

explanation for hysteria: women's uteruses were not diseased, and their bodies were not possessed by a 'wayward internal will' as many Victorian psychiatrists had assumed (*The Female Malady* 32). Freud's major contribution to the study of hysteria was the contention that its physical symptoms, the 'uncontrollable fits, contortions, paralysis, pain, muscular rigidity' (L. Williams 3), and coughs, limps and ticks, were a means for the hysteric to indirectly communicate information about their mental suffering which they were otherwise unable to articulate. Something was stopping hysterics from voicing their complaints, and so the body was finding its own means to express the tension within the individual's psyche.

In the research Freud conducted with Joseph Breuer in the late 1890s, the interview answers of female patients suggested that complaints were frequently of a sexual nature, and could be traced back to childhood or teenage sexual traumas. On this basis, Freud formulated his seduction theory, which claimed that hysterical conditions issued from partial memories of sexual abuse. Experimental hypnosis, automatic writing and speaking and dream recitation were employed by Freud as a means of recovering memories of trauma and allowing patients to confront their past (see *Studies on Hysteria* 21-47). The 'talking cure' as it was developed with such patients as Anna O., in particular was seen as a way to 'reclaim and control subjective territory,' (L. Williams 6); as memories were being repelled from consciousness by a powerful force, a method needed to be adopted which avoided the rational selection process of the conscious mind and broke down conscious resistance to ideas from the depths of memory. The notion of repression was a 'theoretical inference'(Freud, "On the History" 17) of these observations, as was breakthrough: the discovery of the unconscious, the area to which painful memories had been banished.

The claim which would define early psychoanalysis in both crucial and problematic ways was that actual abuse need not be at the root of hysteria. Sexual traumas could be psychic in origin, and rather than looking to verify accusations of abuse, the mind and its fantasies should be investigated. Psychological conflict in later life need not come from instances of real trauma, but could be caused by a mishap in

sexual development: they could be 'rooted in an anxious unresolved experience of infantile sexuality,' as Linda Williams puts it (5). Adult patients who claimed to have witnessed sexual encounters between parents or to have been victims of abuse might, Freud asserted, actually be generating these fantasies unconsciously as screen memories, 'to cover up the autoerotic activity of the first years of childhood, to embellish it and raise it to a higher plane' ("On the History" 18). Freud's disregard for those vulnerable patients who may well have suffered abuse was the price they paid for his breakthrough – the recognition that 'psychic reality requires to be taken into account alongside practical reality' ("On the History" 18). Hysteria was caused by a tension – the inadequate discharge of an unpleasant emotion or memory – and this could be just as equally be a psychic event as a real one.

Fundamentally, Freud proposed that the sexual instinct was a universal and constant psychological force, finding expression in different wishful impulses towards both real and fantasy objects ("Repression" 146). An individual's sexual maturation began with sexual attachment to oneself – infantile narcissism – moving on to attachment to the mother or father. At some stage, social mores and the denials of the parent would intervene to force the child to recognise that incestuous desires are inappropriate. In normal development, the individual would ultimately fix upon a proper sexual object (of the opposite sex), outside of the family and the self. Freud's tale of incestuous fantasy, parental rejection, the repression of painful memories from the consciousness, and the unhealthy consequences of unsuccessful repression formed the basis of the Oedipus Complex. This is perhaps Freud's most well-known and controversial contribution to interwar thought: it is certainly a theory with which the crime writers under consideration here were copiously familiar.

A clearer definition of the architecture of the mind developed from Freud's research into the primary repression of infantile sexuality. In works authored between 1899 and 1915,[2] Freud developed his model of the mind as divided into the faculties of unconscious, pre-conscious and consciousness. During the 1920s, Freud developed and

[2] *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899); *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905); "The Unconscious" (1915).

refined his definition of the faculties of mind as ego, super-ego and ID. However, as golden age novels tend not to represent the finer points of Freud's developed theory, his earlier terminology will be used, and only the premise of the super-ego will be discussed when it influences accounts of mental pathologies in crime fiction. Consciousness, then, is defined as the part of the mind which registers experience and which recognises itself as *self*. It is from consciousness that rational action is directed. The unconscious is where memory and past experiences are stored, and it is also the seat of instinct. Freud compares it to 'an aboriginal population in the mind' composed of 'inherited mental formations,' ("The Unconscious" 195) and in doing so demonstrates an affinity with adaptive psychologies and Social Darwinism, the like of which Light sees in Christie's appropriation of Freud (see Light 104). The preconscious acts as a guard and censoring agent for consciousness; ideas, memories and wishful impulses must move from the unconscious and through the preconscious in order to be made conscious.

According to Freud, many instinct representations, despite the restraining power of the preconscious, are released to consciousness harmlessly; indeed, much of the latent content of the unconscious is allowed to pass into consciousness. Freud credits the unconscious as the source of artistic creation, imagination, jokes and original ideas. Dreams and 'slips', or parallaxes, also provide compelling evidence that individuals have a hidden nature at odds with or unfamiliar to their conscious self-understanding ("The Unconscious" 167-70). The preconscious can, however, resist the movement of memories or desires from the unconscious if this material is judged to contradict the governing principles of the consciousness, or of the social arbiter in the psyche, what Freud would come to term the super-ego. The pre-conscious, therefore, has an executive function in the ordering of the mind, enforcing the moral ideals and social laws of the super-ego and protecting consciousness from the ulterior desires of the unconscious. This mental ordering is represented quite straightforwardly by both Freud and writers like Low in diagrams which show the movement of desires, memories and experiences from one state of mind to the next, or being deflected from consciousness to the unconscious (see Freud, "The Unconscious" 174).

What is repelled into the unconscious – be it a memory of a real event or an instinct-representing desire – is repressed. Repression is, by Freud's definition, 'a process affecting ideas on the border between the system Unconscious and Preconscious' ("The Unconscious" 180). Completely successful repression has no negative mental repercussions, as all traces of it are removed as less and less energy (cathexis) is attracted to it ("Repression" 150-2). Unsuccessful repression has various mental affects. Although consciousness may be protected from outlawed ideas in their complete form by the preconscious, repressed material can maintain a certain degree of attraction within the unconscious, drawing strength from instinct and forming associations with other psychic matter and memories. Although repressed ideas do not generally re-enter consciousness in their original form, their derivatives can, for which reason repression is described by Freud as an 'after-pressure' ("Repression" 148). This return could take the form of nightmares, tics or imaginary injuries, phobias, mental anguish or fantastical fears (as in cases of paranoia). After Freud established that unconscious material could be accessed without the use of the hypnosis (a method he had earlier promoted, see "Hypnotism" and "A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism"), he developed methods of tricking the mind's censor and accessing repressed unconscious material in attempts to heal the patient, which including relaxation, free-association, automatic writing and dream analysis (see "The Neuro-psychosis of Defence" 54-5; *Studies on Hysteria* 111; *The Interpretation of Dreams*, passim). With the consciousness in relaxed state, in dreams or in moments of incomplete concentration, ideas loosely related to the repressed idea could pass censorship and be translated by the analyst.

In interwar Britain, Freud's theories caused considerable controversy. The notion of the unconscious itself was repellent to some; as shall be seen in chapter two, many legal commentators resisted the notion of an ungovernable and unfamiliar aspect within the self, which threatened to undermine notions of the individual as autonomous, reasonable, and capable of exercising free will. As Neil Badmington suggests, 'to read Freud is to witness the waning of humanism,' because Freud's thesis of unconscious

impulses undermines the Cartesian model in which 'the critical determinants of being is rational, fully conscious thought' (6). Freud's writing can be seen as issuing from, or marking the termination of, an older discourse of the self and self-determination.

Equally troublesome was the centrality of sexuality in his account of psychological development. Freud asserts that individuals are defined by the result of the struggle between ego-libido and object-libido, that is, between libido directed towards the self and directed towards external objects ("On Narcissism" 75). Healthy states of mind depend upon the right balance being found. In a mentally healthy individual, sufficient ego-cathexis ensures self-respect is maintained, and is balanced by object-cathexis for a lover, family and for other real-world objects. For those who have renounced sexual life all together, for religious reasons for example, pathologies caused by thwarted instincts need not be the result if one achieves 'sublimation': that is, diverting 'sexual interest from human beings entirely' and sublimating 'it to a heightened interest in the divine, in 'without the libido having undergone an introversion on to ... phantasies' ("On Narcissism" 80). Sublimation, achieving a balance between object and ego-cathexis, is a means to mental health.

Writing against the complex, contrary, prudish, and inhibitory discourses of sex which defined nineteenth-century gender relations, social life and religious morality, the suggestion that people recognise and satisfy their desires was treated as highly radical and implicitly critical of social relations. As repression involves the stopping-up of libidinal energies which demand to be released, the more a society's mores are in conflict with the expression of instinctual impulses, the more likely neuroses are to occur: 'libidinal instinctual impulses undergo the vicissitude of pathogenic repression if they come into conflict with the subject's cultural and ethical ideals' ("On Narcissism" 93). Veering from class, family or social ideals in order to satisfy desires might result in self-condemnation, while their repression could resurface as guilt for fantasy crimes or all-pervasive anxiety. Parents in particular are held responsible for enforcing social laws and impressing upon children the importance of aspiring to favoured moral ideals; they define the form the super-ego will take, as fear of punishment by parents accounts for

much of the anxiety felt at failing in their judgement ("On Narcissism" 101-2). 'Civilisation' as it is learnt in the nursery, 'is based on the repressions effected by former generations, and that each fresh generation is required to maintain this civilisation by effecting the same repression' according to Freud ("On the History" 57).

Freud's approach to ambivalence also constituted a radical aspect to his thought which was particularly attractive to crime writers, not least because their works are characteristically concerned with grief, or lack of it, over the death of an un/loved one. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud asserts that the state of mourning for a lost loved one and the condition of melancholia involve overlapping and comparable unconscious mental processes. The libido of the mourner, which is still attached to the deceased loved one, revolts at first against the need to withdraw itself. In the normal mourning process, grief is overcome by the desire for self-preservation: to live and not go the same way as the lost object, the libido must withdraw from the lost object and eventually seek another, living, object. Melancholics experience a similar 'profoundly painful dejection' ("Mourning and Melancholia" 244) because of a thwarted libidinal attachment, but differ only in that they refuse to withdraw from the lost object. A jilted lover, for example, may refuse to withdraw their attachment to a lost lover, despite strong feelings of anger and resentment. The conflict between love and resentment is overcome when the cathetic energies are withdrawn to the ego itself 'to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object' ("Mourning and Melancholia" 249). Rather than admit their negative feelings, the melancholic treats their own ego like the lost lover, making self-accusation feel enjoyable, as the sufferer feels they are exacting revenge upon the lost love object in attacks upon their own self ("Mourning and Melancholia" 250).

The ambivalence of these relations, the co-existence of love and hate and the resistance of the conscious mind to the feelings of hate directed at the lost loved object, is not restricted to melancholia: ambivalence is liable to complicate the process of mourning as well. Freud considers the obsessional states of mourning, when the mourner blames him or herself for the death of the loved one and feels shame at past neglect, and sees these reactions as revolts against feelings of resentment which are present in any

relationship, and the pain they cause when the loved one is lost. Indeed, 'the loss of a love-object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself effective and come into the open' ("Mourning and Melancholia" 251). Even when the mourning is not obsessional, Freud contends that it is fundamentally concerned with individual struggles of ambivalence, where the ego is impelled 'to give up the object by declaring it to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live' ("Mourning and Melancholia" 257). In this respect it is a comparable to melancholia, which loosens 'the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it' ("Mourning and Melancholia" 257). The emotional states of the bereaved are cast in a less sympathetic light when held to comparison with the morbid state of melancholia, and with the diversion from perpetual grief being the narcissistic desire to perpetuate one's self.

Ambivalence is also a major theme of Freud's social anthropological study, *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Influenced by James Frazer's influential study of magic and religion in world cultures, *The Golden Bough* (1890), Freud shares Frazer's iconoclastic and comparative approach in his explorations of diverse 'primitive' phenomena, including ancestor worship, fear of spirits, reconciliation with enemy war dead and the terror of the corpse, all of which he was drawn to compare with the neurotic mental states of Western society. For example, belief that the dead become demons intent on punishing the living is read by Freud as a neurotic projection originating from guilt at unconscious wishes for an individual's death while they were still alive, as well as unconscious satisfaction at their passing ("Totem and Taboo" 102). The demonic fantasy acts as a form of psychic self-defence, which protects consciousness from perceiving ambivalent, and repressed, hostilities towards the dead. While 'primitive man possessed a higher degree of ambivalence than is found at present among civilised human beings' (Freud's italics, "Totem and Taboo" 111), Freud asserts that atavistic tendencies persist in psychological illnesses like paranoia, in which the ego's judgement of itself against the ideal or super-ego is mistaken for a hostile and watchful external presence ("Totem and Taboo" 114). Freud's insistence that conscious understanding is instigated by unconscious impulses, and that latent hostilities to loved ones could motivate even

socially admirable expressions of grief or excessive tenderness towards the dead, is applicable to primitive and Western societies alike.

The overlapping of the supposedly distinct civilised and primitive elements found in Freud's thought is highly influential in golden age crime novels. Families are often depicted as loci of sexual tension, ambivalence and unsociable instincts, whilst repression and complexes (which have an alternative history in the work of Carl Jung) are presented as a major way of responding to transgressive acts and accounting for the motivations for crime. Of course, the theories of Freud and his followers are not presented in a consistent way in crime novels, but however exaggerated and mediated public interpretations of Freud were, there is no doubt that a generalised understanding of his most potent contentions constituted a radical new way of interpreting human emotions and actions which permeates golden age crime fiction. Providing a considerably more profound pool of motivations from which to construct characters, psychological knowledge affected the kinds of clues that counted, the skills possessed by detectives, and the credibility of final solutions. It radically altered the premise of reason on which the genre was founded, undermining the archetypal ingenuity of both criminal and detective and upsetting the dichotomy between the normal and abnormal mind which had made the form so reassuring. Furthermore, insights into emotional instability and mental pathology complicated the pattern of reason and reassurance the formula provided by introducing ethical questions into the judgement of criminals, whom it was newly possible to see as victims of their own troubled minds.

I. Psychological Detection

The triumph of reason, it has been asserted by numerous critics, is celebrated in golden age crime fiction, but what in fact is 'reasonable'? The answer to this question is by no means consistent, and is highly responsive to the advance of psychological ideas and understandings of madness in the golden age form. Many golden age crime novels, far from excluding madness and mental pathology, treat both as acceptable narrative devices, employing psychology as both a specialist and an accessible detecting method with its own reliable laws. Rather than upsetting the detection formula with its demands for reason, the incursion of insanity, the irrational, and psychology are fitted into the formula. They are also often turned to social critique, as once accepted as a medical fact rather than an instance of individual wickedness or deviance, the presence of criminal madness begs the question: why has this happened, and how can it be helped?

The golden age of detection was a period of rule writing and self-reflection. The Detection Club, whose members included Margery Allingham, G.K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, Gladys Mitchell and Dorothy L. Sayers was formed in 1928. Its members were responsible for putting together what Symons has called, 'a body of criticism … which tried to lay down the limits within which writers of detective stories ought to operate' (101). Its meetings featured mock occult rituals on initiation, during which authors committed themselves to obeying the rules of the genre (Mitchell, "The Golden Age"; Drayton 109). Ronald A. Knox, another club member, penned his "A Detective Story Decalogue" for mystery writers in the same year, whose demands for fair play to the reader ran as follows:

1. The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.
2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
3. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.

4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.
5. No Chinaman must figure in the story.
6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
7. The detective must not himself commit the crime.
8. The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.
9. The stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
10. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them. (Knox 194-196) [3]

Authors often broke Knox's commandments, nonetheless they respected the sentiments they supported, that sense of 'fair-play' which can be recognised at once in clue-puzzle novels. Clues are shared, the detective uses comprehensible reasoning rather than intuition or accident, and supernatural agencies are ruled out along with 'undiscovered' poisons and any other such unscientific devices. The fictional universe of detective fiction, though fanciful, had to be reasonable, or at least seem to be so.

Accounting for degrees of variation between texts, the conventional plot runs as follows. A crime occurs – usually a murder – the circumstances of which are mysterious. A detective appears or is appointed and an investigation is launched. Evidence and alibis are acquired and false solutions are considered and discarded. Finally, a solution is posed. Arrest or another form of containment – suicide, or the death of the murderer at the hands of a member of the cast are not uncommon – is the next step. A marriage between former suspects often completes the mood of resolution.

[3] Ronald A. Knox's "A Detective Story Decalogue" was originally published in his introduction to *Best Detective Stories of 1928-29*.

When considering the demand for reason in the golden age novel, the working out of the solution is central to its achievement. Although many authors intentionally contravened Knox's rules, if only in order to demonstrate their prowess in the form, the principle that solutions should not be inconsistent, deceitful, supernatural or tediously conventional was respected. The dénouement is the moment at which the truth is revealed, but it is also the process by which the novel obtains credibility and consistency. It is an essential moment of demystification, when the plethora of false solutions are rejected, and when the details of the narrative are made sense of and aligned. The principle of fair play, and what Munt has called (although not altogether unironically), the 'detective hermeneutic of pure reason' (10) must apply to the story that is told at the dénouement as much as it must apply to the individual parts which have led to it: there must have been a sequence of clues or telling incidents throughout the novel that can be referred to as evidence in support of the dénouement, running through the novel like an unbreakable, logical chain. An entertaining afternoon might be spent picking through crime novels to assess whether authors were truly so honest. Chandler devotes much attention in "The Simple Art of Murder" to the logical and scientific inaccuracies in crime novels which readers still regarded as logical and scientific (187-9). Although they may be otherwise, what is important is that the dénouement seems convincing, and the most reliable means of making it so is to have the detective refer to the clues that have been distributed throughout the book. The fact that there is demonstrable, or at least credible, logic underpinning the resolution of the crime novel is a generic necessity.

Solutions should also not be impossible. Although there are many examples of scientific nonsense being touted as sense in the crime genre (see Chandler 187; Hodgson 310), the world of crime fiction should obey the same physical laws as the readers' own (hence Knox's rejection of the supernatural). For example, in Chesterton's "The Hammer of God" (1911), a man is gruesomely murdered by a blow to the head with a tiny hammer, creating a serious mystery: how could such a small tool have caused such a serious wound? The solution is that the hammer has been dropped from the steeple of

church, and that the terminal velocity achieved by the hammer at impact caused the fatal damage. Golden age authors frequently draw upon commonplace knowledge of this type to construct their plots, and often the simplest solutions make for the most mysterious crimes. Indeed, Knight suggests that rather than complexity, intrinsic to the classical form is the dramatic shift that occurs when the unsolvable, impossible riddle of the crime is shown to be simple, even 'elementary' at heart. Writing on Poe, he states:

> The aura of genius combines with the actuality of simple explanation – a very skilful piece of characterisation (Doyle will imitate it carefully), which gives the story both a surface complication and an actual simplicity; the audience can admire and also understand. (*Crime Fiction* 28)

While detectives are frequently eccentric in their methods and obfuscatory in their speech, their logic is nonetheless sane and based upon reasoning that the reader can understand.

Reason and Reassurance

Clue-puzzle novels are guided by the principle of 'fair play', which entails the honest presentation of clues to the reader and the ostensible compliance with scientific and physical laws. The closure, and the sense of not having been cheated that the reader experiences at the dénouement is dependent upon the reasonableness of the plot. What, then, does the formula suggest about the demands of readers? What is the literary standing of a genre which demands reiterated reassurance? Amongst his many criticisms of the form, Chandler accuses British golden age writers of producing 'second grade literature' (192), parochial, artificial and dull, and ties all these problems specifically to their obsession with following their 'arid formula' (192). Many subsequent critics follow his lead, arguing that golden age writers privilege formulaic thrills over social comment and critique. David Grossvogel, for example accuses Christie of a dreary predictability of plot that guaranteed 'formulaic certainty' (120), while William W. Stowe complains that Christie's novels are 'imprisoned by Cartesian methodological

certainties' and recommends instead the openness, 'undecideability' and existential pondering of the hardboiled form (373).

Criticism of golden age crime fiction as inferior literature because of its formula have, however, been matched with accounts which find its preoccupation with form and structure an ideal object for the explication of theoretical positions, elevating the standing of the form. During the 1980s and 1990s, scholars influenced by structuralism and post-structuralism from Roland Barthes' *S/Z* to Peter Brooks' *Reading for the Plot* wrote extensively upon the detective formula. Susan Elizabeth Sweeney lists three formal elements common to all narrative – sequence, suspense and closure – and suggests that the self-reflexivity, artificiality and observation of formula in the detective story thematises a reader's desire for closure and thereby 'represents narrativity in its purest form' (3). She claims that by:

> creating suspense about whether and how conflicts will be resolved, every narrative exploits a constant tension between meaning (the anticipated revelation of a coherent narrative pattern) and meaninglessness (the fear that no such pattern exists). (4)

In its insistence upon coherence, meaning and pattern, and in its integral rejection of meaninglessness, detective fiction demonstrates that closure is a demand that readers make on all narrative: crime fiction is no worse offender than any other closed or complete fiction. Rather, although crime fiction performs a reassuring function, the artificiality of closure and reassurance functions as something of an in-joke shared by writer and criminal, at the expense of the over-confident detective and gullible reader engaged in their precarious attempts to stave off irrationality and meaninglessness.

A similar direction is taken by Bo Eriksson in his work on the structuring forces – a term he borrows from Barthes – of detective fiction. Eriksson contends that detective fiction has a unique appeal for readers because of its valorisation of truth and its central dichotomy of irrationality – the mystery of the crime – versus reason, the logical solution provided by the detective. Eriksson's pared-down, four stage detective formula, 'crime, detective, investigation, and solution,' (16) constitutes a uniquely

urgent structure which sparks a desire to know and a 'sense of exploration, common to most intellectual activities' (22). Seeing such a desire for knowledge as intellectual, Eriksson naturally disagrees with the view that detective fiction's emphasis upon solution is escapist or unintellectual. Instead, he adopts a structuralist position, central to which is the 'peculiar, double structure of the formal detection story, where the detective's investigation corresponds to the *sjuzet* [and] the *fabula* describes the story of the crime that is laid bare by the detective' (24). The *fabula* is the objective order of events or pattern, and it provides the foundation for the *sjuzet*, the often perplexing order in which clues are uncovered, suspicions raised and mysterious events take place. The demand that a *fabula* exist is therefore essential to the assumption that reason and order will triumph over irrationality and mystery. In 'undecideable' existential thrillers, the existence of this underlying order is not guaranteed; indeed, postmodern forays detective fiction such as Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* (1985) probe just this need for a reassuring conclusion by denying the existence of an objective *fabula* absolutely.

Structuralist accounts propose that detective fiction installs a coherent narrative pattern in order to avoid or exploit the tension between meaninglessness and meaning. This is not quite the same thing as escapism because, although the tension is always resolved by the affirmation of meaning, the self-reflexiveness, formulaic structure and artificiality of classic detective fiction cannot entirely reassure the reader. Keeping with the issue of reassurance, a contextualised reading of the detective narrative has been given by Michael Holquist, who situates the narrative drive to closure and reassurance enacted in the formula in the same context that generated the most uncertain of literary movements, modernism. A number of critics have considered detective fiction as a highly modern trope: Raymond Williams locates the rise of the detective in the conditions of nineteenth-century urban expansion ("The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism" 88); Light suggests that Christie's novels were a form of popular modernism replete with unstable identity constructions, disordered linearity and an interest in social masks (88); Žižek states that 'both the modern novel and the detective novel are centred around the same formal problem – the impossibility of telling a story

in a linear, consistent way, of rendering the "realistic" continuity of events' (48-9). In contrast, Holquist notes a discord between interwar crime fiction and the 'high' modernist literature that reached its apex simultaneously. To Holquist, the figure of the detective as a rational entity is pitted not only in a mythic battle against a world which seems irredeemably chaotic and insensible to reason, but also against the uncertainties of modernist literature itself. Writers like W.B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot rejected the nineteenth century's drive for a science of origins and chronological world history – themselves consolations for the loss of a theological grand narrative – and turned instead to the archetypes of myth (sourced from the *fin de siècle* popularity of anthropology and mysticism) and to the irrational elements of the psyche revealed in the depth psychology of Freud. To Holquist, these turns to unreason are resisted in the detective narrative. He states:

> when the upper reaches of literature were dramatizing the limits of reason by experimenting with such irrational modes as myth and the subconscious, … the lower reaches of literature were dramatizing the power of reason in such figures as Inspector Poirot and Ellery Queen. (147)

The dichotomy Holquist establishes between high and low literature is, however, misleading, as he goes on to propose that popular criminal narratives were not only popular with the hypothetical 'common reader' but with exactly those intellectuals who were engaging with unsettling modernist fiction. Such writers were turning 'for relief and easy reassurance to the detective story, the primary genre of popular literature which they, during the same period, were, in fact, consuming' (147). If it is the case that interwar detective fiction is reassuring because of its 'flatness of character' (Holquist 147), its defence of rationalism and its guaranteed narrative closure, it is only so because its authors, intellectuals including Dorothy L. Sayers, C. Day Lewis and Michael Innes (the pen-name of the scholar J.I.M. Stewart), consciously excluded irrational elements of myth and psyche which were so influential in modernism's approach to character and plot.

In the work of Ronald R. Thomas, the forms of reassurance the detective story provides are linked less to literary uncertainties than to the forms of power bound up in knowledge. Based upon the work of social and intellectual historian Michel Foucault, Thomas explores crime fictions' appropriation of nineteenth and twentieth-century technologies for fixing identity – the photograph, the fingerprint – and probing the self – the polygraph and Lombroso's pseudoscience of criminal stigmata. According to Thomas, the figure of the detective has been linked since its inception to developments in forensic science. The way in which this figure employs these technologies expresses the text's investment in perpetuating the status quo and containing the unruly individuals of the modern state. When a detective solves a crime, Thomas claims:

> At stake is not just the identification of a dead victim or an unknown suspect, but the demonstration of the power invested in certain forensic devices embodied in the figure of the literary detective. (2)

Forensic technologies are invested with power to know and to uncover the secrets of the self, converting the body of the criminal into 'a text to be read' (Thomas 4) and fulfilling in print the work that Foucault sees as intrinsic to modern governmental and disciplinary societies – the atomisation of people into individuals to be observed, and their aggregation into population of like subjects amenable to organisation and governance (see *Discipline and Punish* and *Security, Territory, Population*, especially 42-5). In response to Thomas's work, it is possible to see detective novels as reassuring because they often assert that contemporary forms of control by individuation (forensic science), and comprehension (through the discovery of general scientific laws of behaviour) work, and are monopolised by likeable and reliable individual figures, rather than a depersonalised and threatening state.

Of course, as Thomas outlines, these technologies are not always reliable, their results being open to misinterpretation and exploitation, meaning their reliability must be guaranteed by the detective. In crime novels, such technologies become part of a repertoire of detecting techniques which constitute a reasonable solution. Of course, they are only part of a repertoire because, as Žižek states, the reader will be 'immensely

disappointed if the dénouement is brought about by a pure scientific procedure (if, for example, the assassin is identified simply by means of a chemical analysis of the stains on the corpse)' (49). If the explanation is merely something that can be tested and proven scientifically, the reader will be as disappointed as if the solution is not backed up by reasoning. Neither the romantic clairvoyant, 'the man possessing an irrational, quasisupernatural power to penetrate the mystery of another person's mind,' (ibid. 49) nor a logician, the detective employs individual reasoning, makes clever associations, accumulates clues and makes use of recognisable specialist knowledge, all of which contribute to the reader's satisfaction with the plot.

Psychology before the Golden Age

The study of emotional states predates the golden age in the work of a number of influential nineteenth and early twentieth century crime writers. Edgar Allen Poe's exemplary locked room mystery, *The Murders in The Rue Morgue* (1841) begins with a manifesto of detection decidedly psychological in character. Here, the analytical method of detection is formulated from the observational and inferring techniques used by the player of draughts or whist, rather than the calculating and rules-based expertise used by the chess player. The narrator explains how the analytical player is able to deduce from their opponent's behaviour the truth they are concealing about their hand:

> He notes every variation of the face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression of certainty, of surprise, of triumph, or chagrin … A casual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment; the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement; embarrassment, hesitation, eagerness or trepidation – all afford to this apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs. (5)

In Poe's account of the card game, the ideal reasoner uses intuitive perception, combined with his knowledge of the rules of the game and a degree of empathy, enabling him to

judge why the opponent looks either annoyed or satisfied. Human behaviour falls into distinct patterns, this excerpt suggests, and the ideal reasoner is able to interpret this behaviour. In a game of cards, however, the breadth of concealed thoughts and reactions is significantly reduced from that of everyday life. Later in the story, however, Poe's detective Dupin is able to transpose these principles into the limitless field of interior monologue and private thought, clearly a realm in which predictable modes of behaviour are rarer. As the narrator and Dupin are wandering along the Parisian streets, the detective makes a comment relating to a matter the sidekick is at that moment silently contemplating. The matter is not something they have been discussing, neither is it something Dupin could have guessed he would be thinking about. At the point of interruption, Dupin appears to have that 'quasisupernatural power to penetrate the mystery of another person's mind' (Žižek 49) which is purely irrational. Instead, what Dupin claims to have done is the opposite of irrational; he claims to have followed the semantic, anecdotal and emotive links which guided the meditations of his companion from the point at which their previous conversation stopped to the point at which he chose interrupt him. In doing so, Poe claims that the seemingly random movements individuals make from thought to thought are guided by a connective logic, even if it this logic is imperceptible to the person actually having those thoughts. Indeed, the thinker is likely to be surprised at the logic that guides their 'unguided' contemplation:

> There are few persons who have not, at some period of their lives, amused themselves in retracing the steps by which particular conclusions of their own minds have been attained. The occupation is full of interest; and he who attempts it for the first time is astonished by the apparently illimitable distance and incoherence between the starting-point and the goal. (9-10)

The language and insights of Freud's theory of the unconscious and William James' notion of the stream of consciousness inform a retrospective reinterpretation of Poe. A prophetic apprehension of later developments in the study of psychic states is, however, not the only matter of interest within the excerpt, or in Poe's detective's methodology. Psychologically intuitive analytic thought by golden age novelists familiar with Freud or

James can be as well attributed to the method of the talking cure as to the scientific principle presented in Poe's stories – that all phenomenon, whether physical or psychical, has a cause and an order which can ultimately be revealed. The psychological reasoning Poe's detective uses seems to have less to do with claims to specialist knowledge of the workings of the mind than with the reassuring promise of reason itself. Holquist, taking a biographical stance, notes that Poe experienced states of mental distress and suggests that he found solace in the authoritative, reasoning mind of the detective, who is capable of tethering and accounting for the same sort of mysterious enigmas that have full rein in Poe's Gothic writing:

> The world was a place of chaos for Poe, a vale not only of tears, but also of unspeakable horrors ... it is in the very depths to which he experienced, and was able to capture in words, the chaos of the world, that we must search for the key to the ordered, ultra-rational world of the detective story. (141)

The logic of human behaviour is as much a reassuring fiction as the figure of the detective himself. Poe's detective responds to the dilemma of the chaos of the world as well as to the problem of the chaos of the psyche. Dupin follows the same principle to unravel the technical details of the locked room mystery as he does to analyse the supposedly impenetrable mind of his accomplice.

Psychological speculation is found in Poe, and it features in Conan Doyle's writing too. A number of Holmes stories begin as the detective watches an as yet unknown client advance along Baker Street, from whose gait and expression he is able to deduce their emotional state and the kind of complaint they are bringing to him. In "A Case of Identity" Holmes remarks upon a female client:

> I have seen these symptoms before … Oscillation upon the pavement always means an *affaire de coeur*. … And yet even here we may discriminate. When a woman has been seriously wronged by a man she no longer oscillates, and the usual symptom is a broken bell wire. (83)

There is psychological sensitivity here, although it lacks the depth, spontaneity and individuality of Poe. What it does propose is an objective science of human emotion,

manifest in physical acts and nervous responses, derived from the adaptive and sympathetic neurology in which Conan Doyle was trained as a student of medicine at Edinburgh. It is true too that Doyle's system amounts to little more than typecasting, the type in question being a woman.

Also of influence on golden age crime writers were the mysteries being written in North America during the first two decades of the twentieth century by authors including Carolyn Wells and Mary Roberts Rinehart. These writers, Knight proposes, influenced golden age authors in their situation of crime in an 'emotional-rich family setting' (*Crime Fiction* 85). Roberts Rinehart's *The Circular Staircase* (1905) is indeed concerned with the romantic difficulties of its implicated youngsters, and both the centrality of a strong female detecting-figure and the involvement of family politics in the crime define Rinehart as an early contributor to the long golden age and forerunner of the interwar writers. Nonetheless, the criminal's motivation in *The Circular Staircase* has a greater symbolic than psychological significance, making the novel read more convincingly as an allegory of capitalist self-destruction than an emotional study of particular depth.

In *The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* Dupin's methodology is presented as a matter of ratiocination, of following semantic and anecdotal links which connect one's ostensibly arbitrary meanderings of thought. It is clear, however, that abstract thought only accounts for part of Dupin's technique; or rather, abstract thought is supported considerably by the reading of physical signs. Following Knight's thesis of the 'inner simplicity' of detective fiction's solutions, Dupin's trick is demystified and made comprehensible to the audience. As Knight explains,

> he has actually watched the narrator's glances, gestures and reactions as he walked through the streets, and, having followed this series of minute points, knows where they must have led in terms of opinions and responses. (*Crime Fiction* 27-8)

Although Knight's assessment of the technique is a touch too dismissive – despite its inner simplicity, the reader of Poe may have difficulty recreating the trick with their own

companions – Knight is right that the solution appears simple: but should it? Why it is that watching the gestures of another and deducing the contents of their thought and feeling appears so simple? The scope for misunderstandings and false impressions in interpersonal relationships is vast – indeed, interwar crime writers joyfully exploit false appearances and inaccurate assumptions at the stage at which the whole cast is under suspicion – and yet the value of close observation of suspects is emphasised time and again in crime novels. It is necessary to enquire further into the techniques they used and the knowledge of human psyche and action that justified the use of those techniques, in order to assess how interwoven psychological knowledge is with the golden age form.

Intuition

Detection Club members took an oath in which they promised not to use female intuition to solve their plots, but it is right to ask whether Agatha Christie's detective Hercule Poirot actually uses anything other than intuition. Like Dupin, Poirot claims to be able to read suspects' minds by observing unconscious tics, slips and body language. As he explains to a slow-witted policeman, 'I would like … to converse – very often – very frequently, with members of the family. … In conversation, points arise! If a human being converses much, it is impossible for him to avoid the truth!' (*Hercule Poirot's Christmas* 545). His cases are still predominantly solved by attention to traditional clues such as found objects and inconsistencies in alibis, but the existence and relevance of such clues are often discovered through close attention to his suspect's actions and thoughts. Poirot is not a professional psychiatrist, but uses what he calls both the 'old' and 'new' methods – new psychoanalytic techniques of probing the unconscious, and the old art of female intuition:

> Les femmes. … They invent haphazard – and by miracle they are right. Not that it is that really. Women observe subconsciously a thousand little details, without really knowing that they are doing so. Their subconscious mind adds all these little things together – and they call the result intuition. (*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* 109)

The reference to the subconscious mind takes for granted a familiarity with Freudian notions, but does not imply that any specialist knowledge is necessary in order to make use of this faculty: even women can do it! Poirot's generalisation is in part playfully evoked by Christie to amuse her largely female readership, and it can be said that for this readership the affinity between feminine knowledge and psychoanalysis has an empowering dimension. By aligning the 'new' sciences of the self, which, during this period, were predominantly practised and produced by men, with pre-existing female 'arts', Christie brings her readership with her as potential equals to Poirot in the arts of detection. Her detective's psychological techniques are more a matter of implied psychological expertise than conscientious forays into analysis.

The advice of alienists, insights inspired by psychoanalysis and insinuations about the subconscious are often employed in Christie's novels to explain human motivation. Such psychological rhetoric, according to Light, lends 'a humanising, common touch to moral judgements' (103). Light also states that Poirot's job, 'like the analyst's, is to listen, as the reader does, to oral testimony' (102). Although Poirot is not an analyst, in Christie's novels 'psychological explanation appears as a form of common sense, a kind of secular morality with new claims to certainty and continuity which help us to form reliable judgements about the nature of human beings' (103). Like the forensic methods discussed by Thomas, psychological laws function for Christie as a series of 'learnable axioms' which can be used to 'limit and contain disorder, making the world knowable, manageable, liveable in' (103) according to Light. Indeed, Christie's novels exploit the uncertainty and opaqueness of characters at the investigative stage in order to emphasise the reordering process that takes place at the dénouement, where it is proven that people do not act unpredictably, that subjectivity is not oblique, and that earlier confusion was the consequence of faulty and incomplete data. The essence of Poirot's method is to reveal all the little details of the case, however seemingly irrelevant, personal or emotional in nature. When all is known, as indeed it can be, common sense popular psychology and such scientific terms as complexes, paranoia and

fixation are used to provide the reader with a comprehensible explanation for motivation and action.

It is a common feature of many novels that multiple suspects are found to have reasonable motives for killing the victim. Implicitly the reader comes to a crime novel equipped with a range of normative assumptions about what constitutes a reasonable motive for murder, which authors will toy with during the stage at which the whole group is under suspicion. Traditional reasonable motives include financial gain, revenge, an escape from blackmail and sexual or familial jealousies – although as Mandel suggests, the 'bourgeois passion greed significantly [outdistances] all other drives' (25). Of course, the reasonableness of motivation can only be determined by the killer, meaning motivation only becomes credible when it is seen to be the consequence of a particular state of mind and appropriate psychological 'type'. The publication in English of Carl Jung's *Psychological Types* in 1923 (in German, 1921) and his delineation of determining categories of personality no doubt influenced the advice given to readers by Christie, to attend to emotional and psychological life in order to judge the murderous potential of her suspects:

> I tried to decide which of them were *psychologically possible criminals*. And, in my judgement, only two persons qualified in that respect … Alfred Lee was a person capable of a great deal of selfless devotion. He was a man who had controlled and subordinated himself to the will of another for many years. It was always possible under these conditions for something to snap. (Christie's italics, 621)

Although the potentially murderous individual named in this extract from *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* is not actually the killer, psychological evidence of this kind enriches the notion of the motive, as well as demonstrating that psychology should be seen as on an equal footing with more traditional witness-based and material evidence such as clues, alibis and opportunity. In Christie's novels, normative possessive or reactive motivations such as financial gain, revenge, escape from blackmail and sexual or familial jealousies are not sufficient explanations for crime unless they are proved to be

acting upon characters who are prone, because of their psychological constitution, to be susceptible to them, as well as psychologically capable of actually committing murder.

In her 1936 novel, *The ABC Murders*, Christie portrays a discord between Poirot's method and police work inflected with psychoanalytic understanding, and offers an ambivalent critique of the value of psychology in detection. Prior to the first murder, Poirot receives a taunting letter from the mysterious 'ABC' telling him to look out for a crime committed in Andover on the 21st of the month. Subsequent to the death of a Mrs Asher on the foreshadowed day, a letter arrives to predict the death of a 'B' in Bexhill and (though the letter goes astray and does not warn him until too late) a 'C' in Churston. Insanity is quickly assumed to be at the root of the mystery, and *The ABC Murders* is relatively unique amongst golden age stories in featuring an eminent psychologist who aids the police in helping to profile and track down the killer. Poirot's role is not, therefore, as psychological advisor, and he repeatedly dampens the enthusiasm of investigators by demanding clarity instead of their reductive or haphazard applications of psychological reasoning. He is not anti-psychology, instead he negotiates a path through the myriad ways of accounting for and describing madness offered throughout the novel. At times he seems to be on the side of the 'famous alienist' Dr Thompson, who looks to complexes – an 'inferiority complex' (482) coupled with an 'alphabetical complex' (392). Poirot certainly seems to support the doctor when he states: 'In my opinion the strength of his obsession is such that he *must* attempt to carry out his promise! Not to do so would be to admit failure, and that his insane egotism would never allow. That, I may say, is also Dr Thompson's opinion' (Christie's italics, 460-1). At this point in the novel he is attempting to ferret out the murderer from the group whom he is addressing, and later he will reveal that his wholesale conviction that the murderer suffers from 'insane egotism' was a tactic of co-ordinated effect, designed to play into the murderer's conviction that he has succeeded in his plot to 'Create a *homicidal* murderer!' (503), that is, to send the police on a hunt for the wrong criminal type.

In his objective, the murderer has been aided, not impaired, by the police and their enthusiastic but hazy adoption of psychological principles. The prime perpetrator here is the 'younger inspector' Crome, a figure with modern sensibilities who is described as 'a very different type of officer' and 'the silent, superior type. Well educated and well read*'* (394). Crome's characterisation and his chafing interactions with older, more dogged inspectors, refer to the actual tensions being experienced in the police between graduates of the new Metropolitan Police College at Hendon (opened in 1934) and both provincial forces and plain-clothed constables from more modest backgrounds who lacked the Met's resources, and had had to gain their experience on the beat. Part of an interwar drive to bring better educated men into the police force, the establishment of the Hendon college had been in part a response to a media campaign spearheaded by Leslie Randall in the *Daily Express*, which bemoaned the lack of dedicated detectives and scientific and technological know-how in the police force (Laybourn and Taylor 85. See also C. Williams xix). What is interesting is that the overwhelming drive of this training policy involved forensic procedures, rather than psychological profiling. The purpose of the 'agility' scheme, as it become known, was to produce officers highly trained in

> the value of the microscope, methods of removing fingerprints from linoleum, blood analysis, the analysis of positions … and microscopical studies of clothing for stains and a whole range of other forensic activities. (Laybourn and Taylor 98)

Lectures delivered by eminent Professors of Forensic Medicine to police forces focused upon these new skills, and in September 1935 constables were treated to a five-day forensics course at University College London, where classes included analysis of footwear, the thorough searching of suspects and the preserving and packing of forensic material (ibid., 99). In this respect, the interwar police force lagged disappointingly behind their literary counterparts, amongst whom fingerprinting, the finding of microscopic clues and analysing bloodstains had become routine.

Psychology was as yet not a part of this history, but in *The ABC Murders* Inspector Crome is clearly intending to advance briskly in his police career with the aid of an enlightened adoption of the cutting edge mental sciences of his generation. He is confident and well-versed in the psychological line of reasoning:

> "I've had a good talk with Dr Thompson. … He's very interested in the "chain" or "series" type of murder. It's the product of a particular distorted type of mentality. As a layman one can't, of course, appreciate the finer points as they present themselves to a medical point of view. … As a matter of fact – my last case – I don't know whether you read about – the Mabel Homer case, the Muswell Hill schoolgirl, you know – that man Capper was extraordinary. Amazingly difficult to pin the crime on him – it was his third, too! Looked as sane as you or I. But there are various tests – verbal traps, you know – quite modern, of course, there was nothing of that kind in your day. Once you can induce a man to give himself away, you've got him! He knows that you know and his nerve goes. He starts giving himself away right and left."
>
> "Even in my day that happened sometimes," said Poirot. (394)

Crome receives a fair amount of Christie's light-hearted mockery in his petty arrogance and patronising regard of Poirot, but psychology plays a pivotal role in Poirot's reasoning. He claims:

> It is not the facts I reflect upon – but the mind of the murderer. … I begin to see – not what *you* would like to see – the outlines of *a face and form* – but the outlines of a *mind*. A mind that moves and works in certain definite directions. (Christie's italics, 429)

The 'certain definite direction' – motive – is frequently discussed, but despite the psychologist's and inspector's best efforts, is not convincingly accounted for. All involved in the investigation agree that 'there isn't such a thing as a murderer who commits crimes at *random*' (Christie's italics, 413), and that 'deadly logic is one of the special characteristics of acute mania … there's always some perfectly coherent reason

behind it' (392). Poirot, however, is more exacting and more complete in his investigations than doctor or police, and rejects their conclusions, which owe more to generalised, misapplied and often misunderstood psychoanalytic ideas than to the specific details of the case. To Poirot, the character of the innocent man they arrest does not quite fit the crime or the purported motive: '[t]here was something haphazard about the procedure of ABC that seemed to me to be at war with the alphabetical selection' (499). Neither does the lust to kill hypothesis convince Poirot. It does

> not quite fit the facts of the case. A homicidal maniac who desires to kill usually desires to kill *as many victims as possible.* It is a recurring *craving*. The great idea of such a killer is to *hide his tracks* – not to *advertise* them. (Christie's italics, 498-9)

There are contradictions in the analyst's psychological reasoning itself, which Crome and Dr Thompson are unwilling to acknowledge. Claiming to have found a science to account for human acts, the innovators have neglected the facts of the case, observation of which should be at the core of any empirical form of study, which is what detection is, after all.

A perceived tension between the moderns and the older generation runs through the encounter between Poirot as sceptic and Thompson/Crome as innovators, but this is a false dichotomy. Poirot is a modern too. As the novel begins we find him moved into 'the newest type of service flats' chosen specifically for their 'strictly geometric appearance and proportions,' causing him to bemoan the fact that 'science has not yet induced the hens to conform to modern tastes and lay square eggs' (359). His modern lifestyle separates him from the older generation, as do his attitudes to psychology. More decidedly old fashioned is the blustering police Assistant Commissioner, who is equally frustrated by both his young officers and the Belgian detective's interest in the criminal's mind. When Poirot demands they look for a motive, the A.C. complains impatiently: 'But my dear fellow, the man's crazy' (482). While the imprecise adoption of psychoanalytic jargon is framed as scientifically unjustified, the superficiality of an older generation's attitude to the complexities of mental life is equally unreasonable.

Gladys Mitchell

While Christie dismisses psychoanalysis in favour of an admittedly vaguely articulated, but nonetheless creditable form of psychology, Gladys Mitchell makes psychoanalytic techniques and modes of interpretation central to her novels. In 1929, Mitchell, an enthusiastic Freudian, introduced the vociferous mystery-devouring interwar readership to Beatrice Adela Lestrange Bradley. A far cry from the domestically-astute detective, Mitchell's irrepressible Mrs Bradley is a Home Office psychiatric consultant and an accredited psychoanalyst. The modest critical attention that Mitchell has received, in comparison with her innovation in presenting the genre's first psychoanalytic detective, is quite disproportionate to her importance. She deserves considerable credit for introducing a mass readership to Freudian ideas in a digestible mould, at a time in which many readers would be as cognisant of the intricacies of the New Psychology as one of Mitchell's characters, who remarks: 'Psycho-analyst. I don't know what they do, quite. I believe it's something mad but brainy. The thing was all the rage two or three years ago' (*Mystery of a Butcher's Shop* 67)

Bradley synthesises the era's paradigmatic savant-roles – detective and psychologist – and, in doing so, renders axiomatic Slavoj Žižek's theoretical comparison of the literary detective with the analyst. In Žižek's Lacanian reading, both these figures are invested with the omniscient power to uncover the secrets of the past, and of the self, and therefore function as 'the subject supposed to know' (57-9). In this conflation of privileged subject positions, Mitchell goes some way to resolving the essentialist and derogatory aspects of Freud's approach to femininity. Because Bradley, a woman, has claimed the right to interpret, she asserts agency both through a psychoanalytic interpretive framework and over the psychoanalytic process. This fusion of feminism and analysis is wittily declared in the title of Bradley's monograph, *A Small Handbook of Psychoanalysis* (1929), of which Munt has remarked 'the diminutive term has to be a phallic joke' (156).

Mitchell frequently jokes, but never entirely at the expense of psychoanalysis, and although little escapes Bradley's irreverent eye, her approach to detection through analysis is never wholly satirical. Bradley considers herself a psychoanalyst 'old fashioned enough to consider Sigmund Freud the high priest of the mysteries of the sect' (*The Saltmarsh Murders* 46). Crimes and explanations are considered reasonable as a direct consequence of their consistency with psychoanalysis, and psychologically credible explanations are essential to her dénouements. In the broadest sense, this attests to the elevation of psychological hypothesis, whether psychoanalytic or otherwise in character, to the level of other sciences already considered as at most, infallible, at least, useful, in the literary management of crime.

Where there are complexes, subconscious jealousies and antagonisms, Bradley notes them, and she enjoys impromptu analyses of suspects and uncovers repressed traumas as a routine investigative technique. In *The Saltmarsh Murders* (1932), the 'batty' Mrs Gatty, who is distinguished by her tendency to define each of her fellow villagers as an animal (Bradley, of course, is Mrs Crocodile), who lives in a converted lunatic asylum and speaks in riddles and mock-heroic nonsense, is not only 'translated' and understood by Bradley, but is cured of her 'maggot' – her mental illness – in a dramatic performance at the village revue: 'The poor woman only wanted to assert herself a little,' Bradley explains (184). The later *Tom Brown's Body* (1949) features the therapeutic hypnosis of a gloriously uninhibited but occasionally violent West African schoolboy, who is depicted in conventional psychoanalytic mould, and very much in keeping with the racism of the day (152-3). As well as these character-specific cures, word-association is one of Bradley's most successful techniques. This method works to extract the truth from both conscious and unconscious liars, even though Freud himself expressed doubt that Jungian word-association techniques, generally used to probe unconscious complexes (see Jung, *Studies in Word Association*), could be used against criminals who were consciously lying to their interrogators:

> In psycho-analysis the patient assists with his conscious efforts to combat his resistance, because he expects to gain something from the investigation,

> namely, his recovery. The criminal, on the other hand, does not work with you; if he did, he would be working against his whole ego. ("Psychoanalysis and the Establishment of the Facts in Legal Proceedings" 112)

Although Mitchell has more faith in psychoanalytic techniques than Freud, their employment in her novels is consistent and contributes to the 'complete' explanation of crime. In *When Last I Died* (1941), statements and clues elicited from suspects through word association are treated as concrete facts and allowed to move the plot forward, even though by her 1949 novel *Tom Brown's Body* a canny schoolboy mocks Bradley's attempts to extract information from him in this way: '*Binet-Simon* stuff!' he scoffs, 'And about forty years out of date' (Mitchell's italics, 100). The assumption that the truth necessary to impose order and linearity on the chaotic and disordered crime narrative is not a material object or a secret that can be elicited by bargaining, but submerged in the depths of an irrational unconscious, pervades her novels and necessitates the use of psychoanalytic techniques.

Mitchell, although she differs from Christie in her identification of psychologically possible criminals, agrees that a unique combination of circumstances acting upon individual psychology, environmental conditions and moral life could turn anyone into a murderer with a significant trigger:

> Mrs Bradley was not one of those psychologists who divide humanity into two groups: those capable of committing murder and those incapable of it. Her view was that, given time, place, opportunity and circumstances, it was impossible to say that any human being is incapable of such an act. (*Death at the Opera* 150)

In the process of investigation in *Death at the Opera* (1934), Bradley concludes that a number of suspects are psychologically capable murderers, from the 'perverse, ill-dispositioned and thwarted' (153) Miss Camden to the 'hysterical' (146) and 'unstable' (147) Hurstwood. One suspect, the art teacher Mr Smith, had a credible motive for revenge, but is excused because of his explosive artistic temperament: he is 'not the type to brood for two or three days over a wrong. If he had been going to kill Calma Ferris

for damaging his work he would have snatched up the nearest object and brought it down on top of her head there and then' (155).

The actual murderer, the aged actress Mrs Berotti, escapes serious consideration because of her complete lack of any perceptible motivation, despite being the perfect psychological type and having the best opportunity:

> although temperamentally she would make an ideal murderer, possessing the artistic instinct, courage, a sort of divine exasperation with fools, resourcefulness and an actress's self-command, it was difficult to assign to her any motive for the crime. A murder without motive is the act of a maniac, and Mrs Berotti, whatever her shortcomings of temper and impatience, was certainly not mad. (153)

Despite Bradley's reasoning, Berotti's motive for committing the crime is close to madness (and comments upon the relationship with exceptional talent and madness): the victim is drowned shortly before she should be appearing onstage in an amateur production of *The Mikado*. Berotti, knowing that a far superior actress will step in to perform the part if the victim is absent, drowns her in order to see the part played by a true artist, rather than the incompetent victim. It is by no means a perfect or entirely credible plot, but it does demonstrate the kinds of changes which occur at the dénouement when highly eccentric individual motivations are accepted as a reasonable account of crime. The fact that the correct solution is so outré, not because it is the only physically possible solution (as in Poe's *La Rue Morgue*, where only the non-human killer would be able to commit the crime), but because it is the only psychologically possible solution, means that the limits of what can be considered as reasonable deduction have shifted significantly. An appendix which contains Mrs Bradley's final conclusions illustrates her psychologically informed 'reasonableness' in the case of Berotti:

> *Motive.* Mrs Berotti is an artist. Everyone insisted on it.
>
> She had seen Calma Ferris act very badly.
>
> She had seen Alceste Boyle act superlatively well.

> She risked her neck to get the part of "Katisha" performed as she knew it could and ought to be performed.
>
> I recognise that this motive would be more easily credible if the piece had been grand opera or great tragedy. It seems a slight motive when the piece was comic opera.
>
> *But* Mrs Berotti is a very old woman. She may not see many more pieces performed.
>
> *Besides* The murder was a gesture. "Away with incompetents!" she said. "Let us have the thing done as it might be done by the angels." (255)

The skills required of Mrs Bradley include psychological awareness more advanced than the common sense empathy or intuition already in use in crime fiction. The deductive work in Mitchell's *Death at the Opera* also depends at various instances on general psychological laws which are by no means the preserve of specialists. Even a young teacher with no psychiatric training is able to contradict an inquest's verdict on the novel's focal drowning:

> All women think about what they'll look like when they're dead, and there can't be a woman on earth who could bear to think of looking like "Katisha". Miss Ferris didn't commit suicide. She was murdered. (66)

In the analysis of Mrs Berotti, Mitchell's psychoanalyst detective probes further than the common-sense, means-end analysis of rational action provided by the young teacher. Its object is not, in fact, rational action, either in the form of general human behaviour or the normative murderous motivations which appear time and again in crime fiction (jealousy, revenge, vanity, profit and so on). Instead she experiments with the reasonableness of motivation itself, and therefore with the moment of explanation provided at the dénouement. Rather than being reasonable *per se*, the motivation is as reasonable as the murderer. For this reason, the detective, who is of course in Mitchell's novels a professional psychoanalyst, must be able to cope with the idiosyncrasy – even unreasonableness – motivation once it is accepted that individuals are psychologically

complex. This is something that a general understanding of human nature simply cannot provide.

Insanity and Homicidal Mania

In Mitchell's novels, anyone is capable of becoming a murderer in the right circumstances. In a comparable way, the highly idiosyncratic individual reasoning that serves as a justification for murder is capable of appearing 'mad' when judged by someone not convinced by the murderer's logic. Light has noted how in Christie, 'the true criminal is never sick and always sane' (103), but Mitchell differs considerably in that in her novels characters with pronounced psychological disturbances commit murder. The principle that the solution to a crime narrative be reasonable, and therefore understandable, appears to be controverted by madness offered in place of motivation: the extreme mental states of the madman or woman are, by definition, marginalised to the extent that they seem to be by their nature excluded from the normal. However, a reasonable madness is permissible. Even in the eccentric reasoning of the Berotti, it is possible to see the kinds of shifts in reasoning which would occur in a crime narrative in which madness permeates the rationale for murder. Specialist, albeit comprehensible, knowledge becomes essential in these cases in order to make sense of a state of mind which to the majority of onlookers will appear senseless.

In 1913 the former medical superintendent of the high security Broadmoor Hospital, Dr David Nicolson, outlined his experience of dealing with criminal lunatics:

> in some cases strange beliefs and morbid fancies show themselves in the previous life-history of the individual which, although in themselves seemingly remote, may afford some clue or explanation as to why the murder was committed … I am anxious to-day to impress upon you not merely the necessity of … leaving nothing out in our scrutiny which would help in getting at the inciting cause, getting at the motive, for the murder. (642)

Nicolson believed that the life-history of the criminal should be documented; minor incidents recorded and treated as clues which, in their entirety, compose the present state of mind and character of the criminal. Motivation, even insane motivation, generates a narrative which can be followed the psychologist.

Nicholson's recommendations could be read as a manual for psychological detection, and there is another point of overlap with the golden age novel. Nicholson was highly suspicious of the notion of the homicidal maniac – the figure who merely acts upon momentary impulse and a lust to kill. The explanation of homicidal mania in law claimed to provide an explanation for otherwise mysterious happenings: it ostensibly accounted for the actions of criminals in a number of cases in which no other motive or explanation could be found. Although it is frequently mentioned in criminological writing of the 1910s to the 1930s, it was rarely taken seriously as a defence.[4] This was primarily because, with Nicholson, most psychiatrists and jurists continued to believe that a motive could be found for even the most outrageous crime, committed by the most troubled individuals.

In keeping with contemporary medical-legal opinion, it is not appropriate for the golden age murderer to be like the raving lunatics of Victorian Gothic literature – no Bertha Mason will ever set fire to the golden age country house. When the insane appear in crime novels, sense is made from their madness. Frequently, in the early stages of countless golden age crime novels someone suggests that a homicidal maniac has committed the murder – a lunatic escaped from a local asylum. This is, however never really an option, and the person making the suggestion is generally as ignorant of the workings of the criminal mind as they are of the workings of the genre. It is only possible to observe fair play to the reader if the reader is convinced by the solution to the mystery: the idea of madness, and *this* kind of madness in particular, in itself does not qualify because it is the opposite of reason, both in substance and symbol. If a novel's understanding of madness is not governed by observable psychological laws, Freudian or otherwise, then it has the tendency to appear as a *deus ex machina* swooping in

[4] Whitlock lists eight cases in which pleas of insanity regarded as irresistible impulse were rejected by the Court of Criminal Appeal between 1911 – 1936 (26).

preposterously to save a flagging story. Characters generally resort to the escaped lunatic solution for just this reason, in order to blame an outsider and alleviate their own responsibility. This device functions much the same way as the rather arch suggestion in many Christie novels that Communists are responsible or, as the Detection Club directive not to blame sinister Chinamen took into account, the assumption that foreigners are generally suspicious. In *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, one character observes, '[t]hen there's that lunatic foreigner prowling about,' (586) thus synthesising the two perils.

The notions of fair play and the rules produced by Knox, not to mention those produced by Aristotle, emphasise the order and integrity of a narrative in which events are seen as a logical working-out of forces generated by events and actions within the novel: a raving lunatic passing by can rarely be credited as a force generated from within the novel. Loyalty to Knox's very first rule, that the criminal 'must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow' also presents the 'raving lunatic' solution with an obvious difficulty: the killer should take part in the plot and be scrutinised alongside other suspects, therefore it would hardly be possible to make such a character appear sane throughout a long novel.

In *Heads You Lose* (1941), Christianna Brand explodes the reassuring promise of the raving lunatic solution, and instead offers an altered view of madness that has its own threats and reassurances. A classic country house mystery, it opens as the decapitation of a detestable neighbour puts all the family under suspicion and evokes painful memories: a year previously, a local maid had been found bound and decapitated in a nearby forest. As the maid's murder had never been solved, the family and locals informally decided that a maniac tramp with an irrepressible lust to kill must have been responsible. In the same way, when the neighbour's body is found, and is found to be wearing a hat owned by one of the family, they jump to the same conclusion:

> A maniac. Not a pretty thought, but at least, ridiculous though it seemed to say such a thing, at least a *sane* one. A maniac had struck again, and this

> time had satisfied some crazy impulse by decking the body of the victim with the first bit of brightness and colour that came to hand. (Brand's italics, 40)

The family are satisfied with this solution, as it both acquits the inner circle of responsibility and tethers that responsibility to a deviant other who can be satisfactorily excluded. The figure of the tramp is distasteful enough to the capitalist landowner, he becomes capable of anything when equipped with mental illness. Brand, however, denies her characters such helpful othering, and the homicidal maniac is dismissed by the police detective Cockrill, because the murder of the maid did not conform to the type of murder which, psychologically, one would expect from such a character:

> [I]f he was a maniac he was a very unusual one, to say the least of it. The girl had been tied up and then decapitated with the scythe; most homicidal maniacs, whatever they may do afterwards, kill their victim with their hands or with anything they may happen to have in their hands – they strangle or bludgeon or slash or stab. The lust to kill is strong, and they don't waste time on fancy stuff like tying the victim up first. (55)

The fantastical figure of the homicidal maniac becomes less fantastical the more closely he or she (but mostly he) is profiled, categorised and rationalised into a psychologically consistent type. However, the detective's advice concerning the maniac misleads both the reader and cast, who would be wrong to believe that madness will not be part of the novel's solution. Instead, it is the insanity of a family member from within, not without, who is responsible for the killings. Brand's plotting in *Heads You Lose* (which is discussed at greater length in chapter two) poses a clear threat to the demarcation of sane from insane, and of rational from irrational, which preoccupies the golden age clue-puzzle.

The homicidal maniac problem suggests another way of looking at Christie's *The ABC Murders*. As much as it is about psychology, it is a novel about madness, or more specifically about how madness is accounted for. Assumptions about madness are shown as both dangerous and invested with power, and the killer's plot entails not only

technical planning but the insightful management of perceptions about states of mind to incriminate an innocent man and mislead investigators on what is, in reality, both a sane and a self-interested crime.

The killer of *The ABC Murders* concocts his elaborate scheme to murder for profit in the expectation that police and public will be taken in by the drama of a serial killing spree by a homicidal maniac, without asking too many probing psychological questions about motivation. The newspaper headlines are loud and predictable: 'Latest … Homicidal Maniac at Churston'; 'Work of a Homicidal Maniac' (426) they scream. Rather than being homogenous and purely sensational, there are a number of ways of accounting for madness suggested in the novel. A man, or rather boy on the street, shares his opinion on the visibility of the insane with a man who, trembling nervously and speaking hysterically, the boy will soon decide is 'batty' himself. As the boy states: 'You never know with lunatics. … They don't always look barmy, you know. Often they seen just the same as you or me' (426). The explanation given for this is the war – 'Sometimes it's the war that unhinged them – never been right since' (427), and indeed the prevalence and recognition of war neurosis by the 1930s, when *The ABC Murders* was published, was enough to make even the post-war generation conscious of its aftermath. Lady Clarke, the wife of the third victim, proposes that madness is a specifically modern condition, a reaction to the intensification of lifestyle, speed and urbanisation of the interwar years, and expresses her sympathy for the killer:

> Mad, poor creature – the murderer, I mean. It's all the noise and the speed nowadays – people can't stand it. I've always been sorry for mad people – their heads must feel so queer. And then, being shut up – it must be so terrible. But what else can one do? If they kill people. (445)

At points, Poirot and the Watsonian narrator Hastings express a cold horror at the madness of the killer: 'A madman, *mon amis*, is to be taken seriously. A madman is a very dangerous thing' (362) warns Poirot: 'Madness, Hastings, is a terrible thing …' (393). Ultimately, Poirot's psychologically astute detection is used to counteract the faddish speculation of the investigators and professionals, and so too does he resist the

irrational speculations of the popular press, with their tendency to view madness in a fantastical and irrational light, emphasising its horror, otherness and incomprehensibility.

'Reasonable in his Unreason'

Raving lunatics are forbidden, but in many highly successful golden age novels mental conditions act either as motivating forces for criminal acts, or contribute to the range of possible false solutions that the detective must disprove. Mental instability put forth as a false solution to incriminate an innocent party is a feature of a number of novels and short stories, as in Christie's "The Affair of the Pink Pearl" (1929) which depicts the false incrimination of an unconscious kleptomaniac. The assumption that madness lays behind crime also has political consequences, best explicated in Dorothy L. Sayers' *Gaudy Night* (1935), which focuses upon crimes committed in an Oxford women's college. Here, the misguided suspicion that the trouble-maker is an hysterical female scholar driven to distraction by intellectual labour and the scarcity of men functions as proof for some that women should avoid cerebral stimulation altogether. In contrast, in Mitchell's novels irrational mental states do indeed contribute to the discovery of the true solution; the killer in *When Last I Died* (1938) is exposed by her superstitious hysteria as 'the nervous, over-strained, weak and clinging little ... murderess' (203); likewise the murderer in Georgette Heyer's pastiche whodunit *Why Shoot a Butler?* (1933) suffers from a pathological complex which governs his means of accomplishing the murder, if not its motivation.

The fact that these novels seem reasonable and were in many cases highly successful demonstrates that the psychological principles involved in their author's plotting were comprehensible to the readership and acceptable under the generic principle of fair-play. Readers should feel themselves capable of solving the mystery, even if the novel is written in such a way that they cannot, and the fact that medical conditions were comprehensible demonstrates that authors assumed a level of knowledge about mental illness in their readership, both in terms of the types of behaviour that could be expected of disturbed individuals and the range of conditions it

was possible to suffer from. Madness as a solution does not, then, contravene the precedent set by Poe that the solution should be rational, because the development of twentieth-century psychology and the splintering of mental illness into recognisable types, including the neurotic, the hysteric and the hypochondriac, meant authors could take it for granted that madness, like material facts or the means-end rationale of common sense psychology, was subject to observable laws. Only adequately taxonomised mental conditions appear, most likely because they enable writers to refer to general understandings of particular conditions and suggest consistency and linearity in the thought-processes of a madman or woman.

Who's Mad?

Only the existence of a widespread, popular understanding of and receptivity to psychological theory could account for the appearance of criminals with pathologies both minor and extreme, who could credibly disguise or even not notice their own conditions, and still function relatively 'normally' in everyday life. Anthropological tracts such as Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890) and Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) demonstrated the pathological impulses behind social behaviour and its links to primitive mysticism and primary sexual instincts, while formulations such as the Oedipus complex, the sexual foundations of neurosis and the importance of the unconsciousness in psychic life took on a new life beyond Freud's original texts. Crime writers did not chiefly use specialist language but what in 1928, writer and lecturer Nan Shepherd described as the 'ordinary educated person's knowledge of the psychological vocabulary' (qtd. in Christianson 37) in order to probe familial relations, build lifelike characters and create the least predictable killers. Introductions such as those penned by Barbara Low or A.G. Tansley were popular sources and when, in *St Peter's Finger*, Mitchell tells us that Ferdinand Bradley 'admired his mother's taste in sons, and fostered what he called "the romantic attachment," playing off the Freudian Oedipal complex against her with a delicate and admirable wit' (236), Mitchell is not expecting her readers to turn to their dog-eared 1905 copy of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*

in the original German: they are likely to have got their information, general though it may be and possibly less than accurate, from elsewhere.

The language of the subconscious and of Continental psychology was far more common in crime novels, and had fruitful consequences for the least likely suspect device. A development attendant on the dissemination of psychoanalytic ideas was the normalisation of both minor and major psychological disturbances. In 1920, A.G. Tansley asserted:

> It is clear beyond all possibility of doubt or cavil that the mental factors which produce the characteristic behaviour of the neurotic and the lunatic are at work in the "normal" mind and give rise to many well-known traits of "normal" behaviour, as well as to behaviour and conduct which we may not care to call 'normal,' but which certainly fall far short of anything for which the help of a physician would be sought. (15)

As Tansley's account suggests, overlapping notions of insanity and sanity were coming to be considered as more true to normal, everyday experience directly as a consequence of the spread of Freudian thought. Within Freud's model of the construction of the mind, even those who had attained normality shared with the lunatic certain functions of mind. The relatively innocuous condition of hypochondria was, for example, seen as on a continuum with more advanced and debilitating conversion hysterias, as both involved a narcissistic withdrawal of libidinal energies from the outside world and their concentration upon internal 'objects', either on a 'troubled' organ or a fantasy object, respectively (Freud, "On Narcissism" 83-4). The normalisation and domestication of mental illness in golden age crime novels was then both a consequence of, and a contributory factor in, the establishment of a popular psychological vocabulary, the existence of which is attested by narrative formations which include madness, psychoanalytic skills and psychological explanations. Even the exaggerated accounts of Freud's theories presented by a sceptical or sensationalising media had a part to play, not least in the creation of the fantastical lunatics who appear in the early stages of many novels.

In this climate of widespread familiarity with Freudian ideas and what Aileen Christianson has termed the 'acknowledgement of radical uncertainty' (39) in human experience, during which time psychological disturbances demonstrated the insecurity of assumptions about the normal mind, some crime writers found scope to portray pathological criminals who are also familiar types to be found at the heart of the home. Golden age crime stories rarely feature hardened criminals, or the impoverished outsiders who dominate the criminological accounts of the likes of A.F. Tredgold and Havelock Ellis; criminals who have been raised in dire poverty and with poor education, suffer from epilepsy, psychological problems and alcoholism, and commit petty thefts, get arrested for fights or prostitution, or commit brutal and unplanned murders in states of drunken aggression. Writing on Christie and her presentation of class, Light asserts:

> The most innocent (the least likely) person may turn out to be the criminal, the obvious deviant and the degenerate are frequently red herrings: the criminal classes are not the ones to fear. It is within the charmed circle of *insiders* that the criminal must be sought; the cuckoo in the nest, not the alien from outside. (94)

This privileged-group paranoia is not limited to Christie's writing, and in many golden age novels it is accompanied by an expansion of the restrictive notion of what constitutes a normal mind and who is expected to have one. In Brand's *Heads You Lose*, the grotesque figure of the homicidal tramp haunts the perimeters of the feudal household, but the threat comes from within. Similarly, in Georgette Heyer's *Why Shoot a Butler?* a pathological aristocrat is implicated in the deaths of his retainers. Sayers, who Light convincingly depicts as often sycophantic in her portrayal of the aristocracy (80), fluctuates in her assignment of guilt. In *Whose Body?* a maniacal nerve specialist, undoubtedly the most unfavourably presented psychiatrist in crime fiction, commits the crime, contravening his social standing and knighthood, while in *Gaudy Night*, a disgruntled servant manages to make a whole college of female dons appear certifiable in order to avenge a past insult to her husband. *Gaudy Night*, though posing as an exception to the golden age rule that which deviants and degenerates from the lower

orders are rarely found to be killers, proves to be remarkably orthodox. The killer works as a servant, but she is the widow of a don whose fall in the world was brought about by one of the female scholars she is targeting, demonstrating how madness and crime are brought about by the very social order that they in turn threaten.

Three Case Studies

In many golden age novels, psychological understandings underpin the plot. Psychology is presented as a specialist, but also an accessible, means of probing the secrets of the mind in the search for the killer, a way of revealing the order that underlies the mystery of the crime scene, and of explaining the solution to the reader at the dénouement. Their use as a detection method conforms to fair play because the reader is convinced by their reasonableness: the reader, then, is supposed to have faith in, and even possess, the psychological knowledge necessary to solve the crime and to see this expertise as an acceptable basis for reasoning. For this reason, the assertion that psychological knowledge contributes to narrative closure and coherence in crime fiction does not entail a dispute with the principle of fair play. Psychologically inspired solutions are presented as reasonable, but this begs the question: does the inclusion of the irrational – madness, or the insights into the subconscious provided by depth psychology – complicate the pattern of reassurance that the formula ostensibly provided?

In representing madness, and positing diagnosis for madness as a solution to their mysteries, authors demonstrated, encouraged and shaped a familiarity with both old and new theories of the workings of the mind among their readership. Moving beyond the faddishness of new doctrines and critiques of the old, these employments of psychology show how such ideas were admitted to the realm of the reasonable, the familiar and the objective. In the first novel discussed below, Michael Innes's *Death at the President's Lodging* (1936), insanity trumps its characters' loyalty to the formula with its demands for fair play, but demonstrates how irrationality demands a renegotiation of the idea of fair play itself. Psychological accounts of madness pervade the text, and are elevated to the level of science, only they are not new Continental doctrines; instead they are rooted

in Social Darwinist accounts of inborn criminality. In the second novel, *Bring the Monkey* (1933), Miles Franklin retains the radical content of Freud's thought by demonstrating how mental pathologies only visible to the psychoanalytic gaze are fostered within traditional social orders, leading to an interrogation and critique of that order. Finally, Gladys Mitchell's *St Peter's Finger* tests the categories of reason, motivation, normality, and reassurance in a plot which involves a highly unstable killer.

Michael Innes, *Death at the President's Lodging* (1936)

Innes (the pseudonym of the Oxford University professor J.I.M. Stewart) is the writer cited by Holquist as a paragon of the genteel interwar rejection of the disorderly (147). *Death at the President's Lodging* offers an obstacle to the schismatic drawing of boundaries between reason and unreason and, in its flirtation with the passing lunatic solution, demonstrates how abnormal psychology can be compatible with both fair play and the demand that the killer have high social status. Set in an Oxford college, the novel is built around the tension between the threat of disintegration implicit in madness and the methodical orderliness, even artificiality, of the scholastic world. What must be countered is the ostensible irrationality of the crime scene, which is littered not just with the corpse of the college's president, Umpleby, but with piles of macabre human bones (purloined from an archaeologist's collection), eerily flickering candelabra and representations of skulls marked in chalk upon the walls. Whether these details are evidence of insanity, 'some perfectly sane man's idea of the humorously grotesque' (57), or a plot to frame a Fellow who previously suffered a nervous breakdown, constitutes the psychological dilemma of the novel. The Dean hopes the murderer is a passing lunatic, but the detective knows the locked college to be physically impenetrable to anyone other than the scholars. This is presented as a conflict of reason, as it seems impossible to locate insanity amongst these intellectuals, whose lives are supposedly devoted to order, efficiency, and absolute purity of thought. This problem is further complicated by the insularity of

the scholars' psyches: their measured natures make them adept at composing themselves under interrogation, leading to conflicting false impressions which Detective Appleby, as a psychological amateur, finds it difficult to synthesise into a consistent psychological profile. When Appleby proposes to a professor of psychology that Haveland, the Fellow who had previously suffered a nervous breakdown, might have committed the crime during a relapse of insanity, he is flatly contradicted, not because it is altogether impossible, but because it is inconsistent, as Haveland's mental constitution does not tend that way:

> Science is infallible, but it is not nothing. And it will tell you with great authority that the bones are a damnable plant – a plant by someone ignorant of abnormal psychology … the circumstances of the President's death are incompatible with what I believe to be Haveland's mental constitution. (170-1).

The detective, as pure reasoner, is somewhat undermined in his role by this prioritising of another's specialist knowledge, and indeed this is not the only matter in which he momentarily bows to the expertise of another. As if to emphasise the novel's confirmation of reasonableness as a generic necessity, Appleby receives advice on permissible plot developments from a don who, like Innes, has another life as a bestselling crime novelist. This markedly self-referential device seems to promise that the narrative will not step outside the safely circumscribed formula of the whodunit, and as the convenient lunatic device is a classic red-herring, the reader is encouraged to be cautious about accepting it.

When Haveland is found to be the killer, it at first seems that the science of both psychology and the formula (if we imagine for a moment that it can be called a 'science') are flawed. But this is not the case, and instead it is within the realms of detection, of ratiocination, that a mistake has occurred: it is reason that is proved to be an inexact science. Haveland did not murder Umpleby and scatter the bones, but he *did* murder Umpleby. It is the reasoning of each scholar that temporarily obscures this fact: one scholar hears the voice of another outside his window luring Umpleby to his death.

He concludes that this man is the killer and, shocked that he might get away with it, moves the body in an attempt to incriminate him. The scholar under suspicion realises what has happened but suspects a different scholar, and so in an attempt to frame him adds an incongruous detail to the crime scene, and so this goes on, with all four suspects secretly adding a different detail to the crime scene. Each scholar's reasoning is methodical, but because they have based it on flawed knowledge, their involvement in the quadruple bluff has obscured the guilt of the real killer. Because they have each interfered with the crime scene in order to create a false impression, it becomes so overdetermined by contradictory evidence that it obscures what it was intended to illuminate.

Rational thinkers can be bad detectives, and so produce false solutions, and it is left to Detective Appleby to unravel the knot unwittingly tied by the scholars. In this he is aided by the compatible sciences of psychology and the formula which, as long as they are interpreted correctly, are infallible. It was an incorrect interpretation of madness that suggested the bones to one scholar as a means of incriminating Haveland, and which led to confusion, but Appleby uses 'true' method when he realises that, although Haveland is not the sort of killer who would broadcast the fact with the bones, he is nonetheless insane:

> Haveland had that sort of abnormality which never loses at least its tenuous connections with reason. Take his motive. He was … a likely candidate for the Presidency – and so … was Professor Empson. When Haveland proposed to kill Umpleby and let the blame fall on Empson (for that was the original plot) he was acting with just that combination of moral imbecility and logical sense which characterizes his type. (216)

Here, the detective takes back command of expert knowledge, realigning the demands of science with the dictates of the formula's own good sense and, of course, conforming to fair play. Although the Professor of Psychology disagreed with Haveland as to the bringing of the bones, he would not say he was not unbalanced. Along with other clues, this intimated that a mental illness would play a role in the dénouement. Fair play is also

satisfied by Haveland's undamaged grasp of logical sense: good detection is still possible because the killer is an able opponent and the crime devious enough to tax the detective and engage the reader. In regard to narrative, Haveland's condition is invaluable: a killer with the intellect of a scholar and an entirely absent moral sense, who will not inconveniently give himself up after musing on Kant's categorical imperative (as another scholar threatens to do). As to the mental illness itself, Innes's definition is clearly not psychoanalytic, but refers to that routinely derided category of moral imbecility, in which normal or extraordinary intelligence was supposedly combined with a complete lack of moral sense (see the discussion in chapter 3). The assignment of biological determinism in these accounts, coupled with their tendency to determine that moral imbecility was incurable, was decidedly conservative in tone, and tended to work in the interests of those not willing to track back into the past of the criminal and look for more contentious environmental or emotional formations of instability. Haveland is relatively advantaged, although Appleby's report defends the determinism and type-casting which would apply to both eminent and more lowly criminal suspects:

> In searching for a murderer amid any group of people every detective knows the importance of a history of mental unbalance. In real-life murderers are not, on the whole, found among chief constables and Cabinet Ministers: they are found among the less normal portion of humanity. (223)

Innes' portrayal of mental illness shows that such definitions, with their confident separation of the normal from the hopelessly abnormal, still had credence.

Miles Franklin, *Bring the Monkey* (1933)

In Franklin's satirical take on the crime novel, the nature of madness itself is interrogated, leading to the suggestion that it is an unstable category which can be used both to silence resistances to power, and to highlight the inherent irrationality, even evil, of power itself. The villain of the piece is the dissipated Lord Tattingwood, who is the representative of a thankfully declining world order that is patriarchal, patrilineal, and colonial in outlook. A feminist as well as an Australian, Franklin's imitations of the very

English genre were, unlike those of her fellow Australasian Ngaio Marsh, chiefly satirical rather than affectionate. In Tattingwood she synthesises the financial and political hegemony of the lord with his sexual perversion to create a killer whose motivation ostensibly conflicts with the rigorous demand for sense inherent to the genre. On his deathbed he admits to a string of murders, including that of his cousin for the relatively sane (at least within the genre) motive of inheriting his title. It is more than this, however, as it is clear that he loves killing for its own sake, something he indulged in his celebrated Boer War days: it 'made big game hunting seem as tame as firin' at a few monkeys … got some of the fire out of me' (Franklin's ellipses, 150). Implicated in these reminiscences is a demand for sexual domination and frustration when it is not achieved, and he admits to trying to kill the heroine because she refused his sexual advances: 'You didn't want me that night – had the impudence to trifle with me – and stuck a pin in me when I touched you. … I'll stick this dagger in you before we've finished, if I feel like it' (149). Murder is for him a conversion of frustrated lust, and he compares the pleasure he got from sleeping with 'Nigger wenches' (150) in South Africa to gazing at the woods in which he murdered his cousin. So too did he kill the attractive young male detective 'to ease the lust that was on me' (152), a lust he generally found it hard to contain: 'civilians are a mouldy pack of rabbits. … I've often had the temptation to stick a knife into a few of them. … Sometimes, when the lust was on me, I had a rough time holding in' (151). A more morally abhorrent character can hardly be imagined, and Munt is right to determine that '[h]is vicious misogyny, handcuffed to bloodthirsty militarism' is used by Franklin to criticise contemporary 'masculinity and dominant forms of sexual exchange' (12). Tattingwood's insanity is then, class, colonial, and sexual privilege taken to their not unfamiliar extremes. Inherent in Franklin's portrayal of sexual and murderous perversity is the proposition that the reasonable foundation of these upper-class values is itself irrational.

The uncertain state of Tattingwood's mind dominates his deathbed scene, and as the heroine has been warned that he is likely to be hallucinating during his treatment, she is uncertain whether to take his words as those of a mad or sane man. She remarks: 'If

insane, it was not in the form of loss of faculties. He was dreadfully fiendishly true' (151). His physician Sir Philmore stresses that he has lost his grip on reality and has made false confessions (158), and thus Philmore becomes the novel's second villain: the figure of the corrupt psychiatrist working in patriarchal self-interest. He is responsible for the care of Tattingwood's wife, who ostensibly lost her mind because of the trauma of the murders and is unable to see anyone due to the danger of shock. In fact, she has discovered that her husband is the killer, and has been effectively imprisoned by Philmore at Tattingwood's request: 'She was thoroughly broken and desperately ill – neurasthenic – and a husband has a great pull, in spite of the suffragettes' (154). However, as Tattingwood admits, 'Her mind is not unhinged' (154), although this is never formally recognised and the heroine and her friend must contrive to rescue her from the nursing home where the attendants are ready to interpret any outburst of emotion or frustration as hysteria (163). Philmore is therefore wrong in both diagnoses, but that does not mean that Tattingwood is by consequence sane, at least not in a sense that is conducive to any form of social living. His sanity is the centuries-old madness of the aristocracy, possessive individualism solidified into acceptable political values founded on the primal instincts of sex and self-preservation.

Gladys Mitchell, *St Peter's Finger* (1938)

Mitchell's murder mystery is set in an isolated convent school and concerns the drowning in a bath of Ursula, a young, female pupil. An inquest returns a verdict of suicide, but the circumstances of the crime, and the fact that the victim is heiress to a considerable fortune, convince the detective, Mrs Bradley, that Ursula was murdered. Following the logic of reasonable motivations, the first suspect is therefore her cousin and fellow-pupil, Ulrica, who is now next in line for the legacy. The traditional financial motive does not, however, make sense in Ulrica's case, because she is a devoted Catholic who intends to enter the convent herself and surrender her worldly wealth as soon as she is old enough. With Ulrica above suspicion, inheritors further down the line are considered, along with the theory that the murderer is a mentally deranged, thwarted

woman, subject to sexual repression and unsublimated, murderous urges. The location is, after all, a convent and, as Sayers' *Gaudy Night* (1935) attests, Freud's early writings on hysteria could be turned to such a lurid conclusion. In fact, in a way, they are, as the murderer turns out to be the highly religious Ulrica after all. Her motivation is the first that was suggested, which the reader has already disregarded, the legacy, which she intends to give to the convent as dowry as a penance for her sins.

The solution is both a surprise and *not* a surprise because the reader, armed with a psychoanalytic vocabulary, might have been able to interpret the signs offered to them throughout the novel. It should be no surprise that it is not raving lunacy which inspires her behaviour, but a specific delusion which only affects certain aspects of her thought and actions. The reader can therefore balance Ulrica's politeness and excellent school record with her more abnormal traits, in particular her desire to suffer. At Lent, she starves herself until she becomes unwell (149) and wears upon her arm 'a sharp-toothed band of metal' as voluntary penance, an object which the anthropologically astute Bradley regards 'with the detached scientific interest which she would have displayed for totem worship or a ring worn through the lip or nostril' (313). These masochistic acts are both public and private: in public, she willingly explains how she desires to replicate the sufferings of saints (98), as '[s]he needed to suffer, she felt, and wished that the suffering could be greater so that she could identify herself more closely with the solemnity and preparation of the season' (149); in private, her masochistic conduct is more emotional and less devotional in origin:

> "If Mary were out of the way … if Mary died," she thought, her needle pushing carefully into the stiffness of the calico, her finger, where she had pushed the needle with it instead of with the covering thimble, springing red, "grandfather would not be tempted … he would have to leave me the money." (Mitchell's ellipses, 150)

Mitchell's approach to ecstatic religious worship refers to the writings of Freud and his predecessor Charcot on female icons of the church, including the 'hysterical' Joan of Arc (Showalter, *Female Malady* 32) thus encapsulating the psychiatric and psychoanalytic

project of reassessing ostensibly stable cultural events and signifiers and drawing attention to their psychic and pathological origins.

Ulrica's other symptoms, nervousness, sleeplessness, as well as sleepwalking, lead Bradley's chauffeur and her lawyer son, respectively, to offer their layman's diagnoses:

> "Very hysterical subject, I should fancy, madam. Rather like some of Herr Hekel's young ladies, I imagine. Full of imagination, and out for sympathy and notice." (268)
>
> "Some form of hysteria, I imagine." (293)

As this exchange suggests, these assessments are based upon popular portrayals of hysteria in predominantly female, possibly attention-seeking subjects. It is not in this 'general' sense that Ulrica is an hysteric, and she is not an hysteric at all according to the definition of hysteria most commonly understood: a psychic conflict caused by the repression of a sexual desire and originating from primary infantile sexuality. The reader, informed by the same accounts, noting her general instability, would be technically right in deducing that Ulrica was the murderer, but they would be unable to account reasonably for her motive in committing the crime according to this rather reduced understanding of the condition. More, not less, specific understanding of psychoanalysis is necessary to solve the mystery of the novel.

In Sayers's *Gaudy Night*, a novel which relies on the false solution of hysteria as a consequence of sexual repression, the narrative consistency of such a solution is suggested by the fact that the assailant is targeting the college (where women live chaste and scholarly lives) as a whole, as well as leaving scattered in public places some highly sexually provocative images. Mitchell does not differ from Sayers in her support for all-female environments and meaningful work as an antidote to traditional female roles, and through her portrayal of the nuns makes clear that sexual inactivity does not necessarily lead to mental aberration. That Mitchell was not averse to explaining female madness as sexual pathology does not necessarily undermine a feminist reading of *St Peter's Finger.* She created a sexually repressed killer in *The Saltmarsh Murders,* who suffers from 'inverted nymphomania' (281), who is blamed for driving her frustrated husband to

adultery, and whose obsession with celibacy leads her to commit two murders. In Mitchell's 1942 *Laurels are Poison,* Bradley directs her search towards 'a person of a type familiar to all students of the morbid psychology of sex' (234), a woman who is jealous that her suitor preferred, and went on to have a child with, her younger and more attractive half-sister. Unlike these two morbid females, the nuns in *St Peter's Finger* are endlessly practical, generous, stable and empathetic, having lived full and colourful lives prior to taking the veil, and pursing interests in art, literature and science within the convent. While Ulrica is described as ethereal and seems 'not of this world' (267) the nuns are 'too practical … to be warrantably called ethereal' (268). Their worship is sublimated and calm rather than ecstatic, and they take a pragmatic, modern attitude to self-denial, all in all causing Bradley to feel curiously envious of their lives. Sublimation is, then, the way to lead autonomous lives at the same time as escaping repression, meaning the convent is clearly not the perfect environment for the breeding of sexual hysteria.

If it is not sexual repression in an all-female environment which pushes Ulrica to murder, what then? Sexuality suggests itself in *Gaudy Night* and *The Saltmarsh Murders*, but the only comparably pathological recurring motif in *St Peter's Finger* is suicide. When Ursula is found drowned in the bath, the inquest returns the verdict of suicide. The case is complicated in that Ursula was a Catholic and would have regarded suicide as a terrible sin. A variety of characters offer their opinions on the potential suicidal tendencies of the victim: the Mother Superior claims the child was good natured and religious and so would be unlikely to commit such a sin, while the hale and hearty games teacher assesses her as '[n]o good at games or swimming. Timid as a rabbit. Just the type for suicide, of course' (43). The emotional state of the probable suicide, usually a woman, is contemplated in many of Mitchell's novels, with characters differing diagnosis demonstrating the limitations of common-sense or intuitive psychologies in comparison to the rigours of psychoanalytic training. This is especially true in the portrayal of Ursula and Ulrica, who are twinned in their names and their right to the legacy, as well as in the novel's discussions on suicide. The victim, Ursula is described

as the 'Celtic twilight type … Pale and interesting. *You* know. Keen on poetry' (44). Although she is religious, she does not share Ulrica's commitment to the faith, and is unlikely to have pursued a religious career like her cousin. Although the victim, Ursula, is inaccurately framed as suicidal, it is Ulrica who manifests genuine suicidal tendencies, despite her devotion to Catholicism. A natural progression from her masochistic practices, she is found more than once on the verge of tipping herself down a flight of stairs or out an open window, and makes a deep slash on her arm with glass from Bradley's car window. It is in the conflict between these suicidal tendencies and her faith that the real motive for murder can be deduced.

Early in the novel, a nun explains that Ulrica's father was an atheist and so did not educate her as a Catholic. Now, 'she is anxious to do all in her power to combat the evil that has been done' (94). Her motivation is to obtain the legacy, which she intends to give to the convent she enters as a penance for her sins. This very generous motivation only makes sense when Bradley probes into Ulrica's unconscious conflicts and drives, her early education by her atheist father:

> The child, brought up without positive religious beliefs, was always in a state of mental conflict, for she could never reconcile her early training with her later religious ecstasies. All adolescents are at war within themselves, but in this child the fight was terrible enough to overwhelm her. Somehow, she had to rehabilitate herself in the eyes of God. Somehow, the family fortune had to go to the Church. That was how she saw it. She had to expiate, somehow, the terrible sin of her father's atheism. (348)

While the psychologically unsophisticated regard her as a classic hysteric, the psychoanalytically astute Bradley provides an accurate diagnosis. To Freud, repression is fundamentally concerned with keeping 'the idea which represents an instinct' ("Repression" 166) away from consciousness. Although this seems contradictory, as all instincts, by their nature, are pleasurable and desirable to the individual, Freud addressed the problem by asserting that the instinct must be in conflict with another claim or intention upon the subject in order to be repressed. As social mores discipline

individuals against incestuous desires, this disciplining would make fulfilment of that instinct more unpleasurable than its satisfaction. This is equally true of other repressed desires which represent an instinct, for example the satisfaction of a non-incestuous sexual desire by a person with strong convictions in favour of religious celibacy would result in guilt and self-reproach rather than satisfaction proper.

Ulrica's desires are not sexual. She wishes to be 'rehabilitated' in the eyes of God, but internally she feels the doubt of her atheist upbringing: she is not an 'innate' Catholic (348), so what is repressed is not sexual desire but irreligious thoughts. Her attempt to gain the legacy by killing her cousin is a consequence of the 'mad' logic inspired by her internal conflict. Her masochism and her frequent attempts to commit suicide after the murder are the psychological aftermath of the crime, which she had intended to be judged as a case of 'Accidental Death'. When the inquest ruled that her cousin had committed suicide, she experienced psychological trauma:

> To have her innocent cousin – for she never thought of her except as a cypher and a pawn – accused of mortal sin, and wrongly accused, worked on her mind, and roused in her a dormant suicide complex. (347)

The dormant suicide complex constitutes, for a large part, the irreligious elements of her thoughts, and it is this which is in conflict with her guilty, Catholic super-ego.

Whatever an innate suicidal tendency may be, what matters is that it is an individual, rather than generically gendered condition. Mitchell's tacit feminist critique is conducted within a broadly Freudian framework, yet there is no mention of the aspects of Freud's works which are most troubling to feminists, such as penis-envy, castration complexes, self-hatred and the resentment of the mother which could only be only be overcome by the acceptance of heteronormative sexual relations. For this reason, it is likely that Mitchell is taking issue with both popular and textbook Freud, by suggesting and discarding an understanding of Ulrica's behaviour as sexual pathology. A potential solution to the problems she defines in psychoanalysis is a feminist led practice, both discernible in the analysis of Ulrica and in the extraordinary characterisation of Bradley herself. This disputative relationship with Freud does not undermine Mitchell's

relationship with the method, instead it aligns her with the several other analysts who were querying Freud's account of female psychology during the twenties and thirties, including Karen Horney, Alfred Adler, Ernest Jones and, later, Clara Thompson (see Miller). As Showalter has contended, the male self-interest in the interpretation of Freudian ideas, and Freud's own explication of female psychology as 'a defective version of masculine psychic development' (*Female Malady* 199) meant that female practitioners rarely offered alternative accounts or achieved success as psychoanalysts during the interwar years. It is Bradley's position as a feminist practitioner of Freud which enables her to resist such patriarchal interpretations,

The dénouement of *St Peter's Finger* relies upon the 'reasonableness' of mental illness as a motive for murder. Readers are genuinely encouraged to consolidate their intuitive skills with their knowledge of psychoanalysis and employ their understanding of mental illness. The novel conforms to the rules of fair play, as clues expand from being overheard conversations about financial difficulties or familial grievances to unusual reasoning, actions symptomatic of mental illness, nightmares, tics and mood swings. The constellation of concepts representing Freud's ideas to the general reader, which Nunn described as akin to the 'jargon of astrologists,' (5-6) provides the theoretical knowledge necessary to understand Ulrica's motive and judge the consistency of the plot. However, a more informed and critical interaction with Freudian thought is also demanded in Mitchell's feminist reading. Most importantly, the individual is presented as such and not reduced to an impossibly broad psychological type (woman), for which reason it is necessary to take into account all of Ulrica's utterances, her masochism as well as her atheism, her sleepwalking as well as her religious ecstasies, to complete a diagnosis.

Although a range of obfuscating devices are premised as psychology in many golden age novels, psychology and psychoanalysis are incorporated into the detective's solution in many texts. Intuition is practiced by golden age detectives, but intuition is not a simple, stable, empathetic relation between individuals. Instead it is informed by contemporary

psychological theories. One way of accounting for this is through attention to the incursion of madness and mental pathologies in crime narratives, derived from a public engagement with psychoanalysis and adaptive psychology. Unsettling the form's generic demand for rationality, seemingly irrational actions are accounted for according to theories of mind known by and comprehensible to the reader. The rules of fair play are obeyed and interwoven with psychological, often psychoanalytic explanations for criminal motivations. In Mitchell's work in particular, these explanations are consistent with other analyses of character, which serve to blur distinctions between the normal and abnormal. This is just one way in which the golden age use of psychology presents opportunities for subversion. As Mitchell's novel demonstrates, investigations of insanity and its origin can be the conduit for feminist critiques of popular misconceptions of female psychology, while Brand's and Franklin's novels show how madness can manifest the destructive essence of sexual, class, and imperial hegemony. Innes' murder mystery is of a more socially conservative persuasion. Informed by evolutionary psychologies, it uses the example of madness to toy with the notion of reason itself, before finally allowing scientific reason to intermingle with the genre's formulaic demands. In each case, psychology only works if it is internally consistent and comprehensible, meaning that homicidal maniacs and raving lunatics rarely grace the pages of a golden age text. These conclusions suggest the scope of a new discussion, as the use of both psychology and madness has other consequences in the golden age novel. Psychology raises a new set of ethical problems as it becomes necessary to question whether the detective is merely a diagnostician of motivation, or has, in exercising psychological expertise, turned the criminal from prey to patient.

II. Guilty but Insane

In detective fiction, the reassuring effect of the dénouement is achieved through the assignment of responsibility. The malevolent agent behind the chain of mysterious events is located and the sense of fear and instability they have generated is exorcised. The discovery of a moral culprit relieves the sense of guilt the group have all vicariously suffered, and the figure of the detective triumphs as the conduit of reason, justice, and group solidarity. That, at least, is what is supposed to take place, but what if passing a moral judgement upon the criminal is not so clear cut? If the criminal is not a morally reprehensible villain, but suffers from a mental illness, what new responsibilities are placed upon the figure of the detective?

Writing of Christie's novels, Light suggests that 'the true criminal is never sick and always sane' (103). Insane people may appear alongside those suffering complexes but, according to Light, these are false solutions, and the murderer generally 'knew what he was doing, is as sane as the next person, and therefore able to be ostracised and punished' (103). The satisfaction of the desire to ostracise and punish is, according to Light, intrinsic to the meaning of the golden age formula, meaning that to pen a criminal suffering from a mental illness might elicit unwanted sympathy from the reader and make such a satisfying solution impossible. Michael Innes' *Death at the President's Lodging* and Miles Franklin's *Bring the Monkey* both feature mentally unstable murderers, but these figures are beyond the reader's sympathy. In both cases, the ethical difficulty of reprimanding the insane is evaded, as the criminals die before the question of punishment is raised: Franklin's villain dies a smugly comfortable death, while Innes' suicidal murderer, in effect, contains himself by committing suicide. In Innes's work, the reassuring effect of the dénouement remains intact, while Franklin's work, as a political satire, self-consciously inverts the desire for reassurance.

Of course, sympathy with the killer is not unheard of in crime fiction. Christie's *The Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) is a classic example of a murder condoned by both detective and reader. In that novel, the passengers who slaughter Ratchett are

exacting their revenge for a previous unpunished murder. When Poirot connives with the group to hide the crime from state justice, he is siding with vigilante group morality which, to a great extent, resembles the regular ending of a golden age mystery. Rather than ostracising and punishing the killers, he agrees with them that the true crime was committed by Ratchett, who has by that time successfully, albeit brutally, been ostracised and punished. The criminals are redeemed because the group agrees that the crime was both moral and reasonable, and the detective maintains his authority by being responsive to the needs of the group.

The choice not to reprimand the murderer is, then, relatively unusual in a genre which is classically concerned with punishment, partly in a legal sense and as importantly in a social-symbolic, group-building sense through their ritual unveiling and exclusion. Gladys Mitchell's *The Saltmarsh Murders* and *St Peter's Finger*, and Christianna Brand's *Green for Danger* therefore stand out as novels which resist the demand for punishment and exclusion by questioning the notion of criminal responsibility itself. Proposing mercy and understanding in place of the trope of the relentless hunt for the killer, these novels stage an altered interaction between the insane criminal and detective which is influenced by contemporary legal debates concerning the responsibility of the insane. During the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, jurists and psychologists disputed the relevance of contemporary laws. The impact of these discussions is felt in these texts' interrogation of the dénouement as a means of healing society and overcoming deviancy. The issue of responsibility is at stake, not only with regard to the killer, but to the detective too, who no longer controls and punishes the killer's threatening deviancy, but rather diagnoses and attempts to remedy the mental illnesses which have inspired criminal actions. By involving their characters in efforts to conceal the offender, or offering them the chance of redemption through psychiatric recovery under the detective-analyst's expert guidance, these texts raise a new set of ethical questions about the causes of crime and group responsibilities towards the insane.

Guilty But Insane

Since the passing of the Trial of Lunatics Act of 1883, 'guilty but insane' has been the sentence passed in English criminal trials when the defendant is judged to have been *non compos mentis* at the time of committing a crime. When an insanity plea is successful, it means that the defendant is not to be held legally or morally responsible for their actions, and in consequence receives care in a criminal lunatic asylum such as the high security Broadmoor Hospital, rather than punishment for their offence. Golden age crime fiction chiefly involves murder, and insanity pleas in murder trials were the prime locus of debate during the interwar period because the penalty for murder was execution (until the Murder (Abolition of the Death Penalty) Act of 1965). At stake was not only the life of the prisoner, whose criminal responsibility may be in doubt, but also the robustness of social institutions as manifested in the law, and the gravity of capital punishment as a deterrent against crime.

The criteria that were used to judge the defendant's state of mind, outlined in the M'Naghten Rules, were the subject of debate since their institution in 1843, and came under increased scrutiny prior to the First World War and in the interwar years. The period after the armistice saw the Rules being tested according to new criteria which reflected the broadening of expertise and ideas in psychiatric and psychological theory and, to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis. In these debates, medical and legal arguments tended to be polarised. Representatives of psychological medicine pushed for the standardisation of a modernised definition, while legal thinkers defended the relevance and flexibility of existing laws. In both direct and indirect ways, these debates found their way into interwar crime novels. In the broadest sense, they contributed to the common stock of ideas about crime and criminality held by a mass readership. High profile cases fuelled a public debate over the Rules and, more pragmatically, how they were implemented. The 1922 trial of Ronald True, which we will consider in a moment, threatened to undermine the credibility of legal definitions of insanity and to change the place of psychology in court, nearly leading to a significant change in the law.

These medical-legal events motivate changes to two central and related aspects of the golden age formula in the novels under discussion: the construction of the detective as a trustworthy and reassuring figure concerned with enforcing the moral and legal values of the group, and the figure of the criminal as destabilising, threatening other. Both are modified and tested in ways that reflect contemporary debates and change the meaning of the form.

The figure of the detective occupies a complex and often contradictory position with regards to social institutions and formal legal authority in much crime fiction, both of the golden age period and beyond. Often detectives operate as private investigators or enthusiastic amateurs who deliberately confound police investigations and work in the grey areas of the law in order to achieve their objective, the resolution of the mystery and the containment of the offender. In Gladys Mitchell's novels, interrogation of the M'Naghten Rules not only pits detectives against the written law, but against the group desire to punish, refuting the conservative, affirmative and reassuring functions of the detective and giving this figure new authorities over and above the often merciless and ill-informed group. In contrast, Christianna Brand's detective, while remaining loyal to the letter of the law, loses the respect of the group and his authority with it.

The M'Naghten Rules

> [T]o establish a defence on the ground of insanity, it must be clearly proved that, at the time of the committing of the act, the party accused was labouring under such a defect of reason, from disease of the mind, as not to know the nature and quality of the act he was doing; or, if he did know it, that he did not know he was doing what was wrong. (*M'Naghten's Case*)

English law first formally recognised that insanity could affect guilt in the seventeenth century, when it was established that no crime could be committed without a felonious intent or purpose. The legal principle thus established, *actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*, confirmed that 'you cannot have a criminal act without a guilty mind' ("Murder And Insanity" 1049), making cognition and understanding a primary

determinant of guilty. If a person was considered *non compos mentis* – of unsound mind – they were thus irresponsible in law. During the seventeenth century it was determined that insane criminals should not be executed, as it would be morally wrong to send them to God in an unfit state. At this time, there was no standardised way to test mental states, but decisions in trials in the 1720s helped establish that a criminal must be so deprived of reason that they resembled a 'wild beast' if they were to be considered irresponsible (*R. v. Edward Arnold* 765). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, different degrees of insanity began to preoccupy legal thinkers, in particular those delusional cases who 'give the appearance of being deluded only in respect of one subject but who appear to be sane in all other matters' (Whitlock 13). As with the wild beast test, it was agreed that the delusion a criminal was suffering would have to be extremely disabling in order for them to escape punishment, an understanding which persisted into the early nineteenth century.

Criminals suffering from less severe delusions began to meet with greater understanding in law at the turn of the nineteenth century and in the years leading up to the institution of the M'Naghten Rules. During the 1800 trial of James Hadfield, who tried to kill King George III, the defence attacked the traditional tendency only to excuse crimes committed by the profoundly afflicted, those who are in 'such a state of prostrated intellect as not to know his name, nor his condition, nor his relation towards others' (Whitlock 15). Such madness, the defence asserted, was exceedingly rare, and far more common were delusions which did not affect behaviour and reason absolutely, but which could coincide with ostensibly normal behaviour:

> Their conclusions are just and frequently profound; but the premises from which they reason … are uniformly false :- not false from any defect of knowledge or judgment; but, because a delusive image, the inseparable companion of real insanity, is thrust upon the subjugated understanding. (*R. v. Hadfield* 1314)

The understanding of insanity as primarily governed by delusions was the basis of the decision to acquit Daniel M'Naghten some forty years later. M'Naghten was suffering

from a persecution complex and paranoid delusions and, in fear for his life, tried to shoot the Prime Minister, Robert Peel, mistakenly killing his secretary Edward Drummond instead. After M'Naghten was acquitted, a panel of judges presented the basis of the Rules before the House of Lords in an attempt to rationalise the criteria for insanity pleas (*R. v. M'Naghten*). The most regularly excerpted passage from the Rules is the quotation above, which states that a defect of reason from disease of mind must be present to make a criminal not responsible. The two kinds of madness which qualified under M'Naghten were a lack of awareness of the act being committed and a confusion as to whether the act was morally wrong. If the accused did not realise they were killing someone, they would come within the terms of the act. This was exemplified in the so-called Dresden china case, in which a Lord murdered his servant, believing him to be a piece of pottery ("Murder And Insanity" 1049). Equally, if a defendant had not known they were doing wrong, they would be classed as guilty but insane. M'Naghten had believed he was acting in self-defence when he shot Drummond, meaning he fell under the remit of the rules.

From their creation, the Rules were criticised by medical thinkers. Their emphasis upon delusions as the basis of insanity was frequently attacked as irrelevant and uncharacteristic of many mental disturbances, as was the notion that knowledge of right and wrong had a predictable relationship to mental illness. A particularly perplexing issue was that of so-called partial insanity, which was a consequence of combining the demand that criminals act morally whilst experiencing delusions. This was a feature of M'Naghten's case. He was not a raving lunatic nor a wild beast, detached entirely from reality, but he was convinced that Peel was threatening his life. This was, of course, a delusion, but otherwise M'Naghten's decision to kill Peel in self-defence was based on sound reasoning. This seemed to suggest that the insane element of the mind could be separated from the sane and reasoning element. In cases such as M'Naghten's, the judges concluded that the prisoner should be judged as if their delusion was real. If M'Naghten's life had actually been under threat, it would have been justifiable for him to act to defend himself. On the contrary, '[i]f his delusion was that

the deceased had inflicted a serious injury to his character and fortune, and he killed him in revenge for such supposed injury, he would be liable to punishment' (Whitlock 21). The Rules did not take into account the likelihood that a person experiencing a delusion, a profound emotional and psychological event, might not be able to reason clearly and sanely as a consequence. In his capacity as a Professor of Medical Jurisprudence, Henry Maudsley complained in 1874, '[h]ere is an unhesitating assumption that a man having an insane delusion has the power to think and act in regard to it reasonably ... he is in fact bound to be reasonable in his unreason, sane in his insanity' (qtd. in Whitlock 23). To Maudsley, the Rules were psychologically insensitive in their definition of madness as a specific defect of reason based on false, delusional premises rather than an emotional disturbance which could affect how people reasoned and their relationship to right and wrong.

In 1883, the judge Sir James Stephen proposed an additional test of criminal responsibility which would allow a defence of irresistible impulse to be put forward, if it could be proved that the defendant was, at the time they committed the crime, 'prevented either by defective mental power or by any disease affecting his mind from controlling his own conduct, unless the absence of the power of control has been produced by his own default' – by his own default, Stephens meant conditions individual choice played a part in, such as insanity due to alcoholism (168). Irrespective of whether the criminal had understood the physical nature of the crime or its moral consequences, this clause would have led to a more flexible, psychologically aware and case-specific means of assessing responsibility. It was not taken up in the nineteenth century because of the perceived threat to the consistency of the law: however, Edwardian and interwar critics of M'Naghten often referred to the advice of Maudsley and Stephen when they complained that rigorous application of the Rules resulted in haphazard judgements in individual cases, as the Rules were often misunderstood by juries and misrepresented by judges ("Murder And Insanity" 1049). In a murder trial of 1908, for example, a judge told the jury: 'If the prisoner knew he was doing wrong, it does not matter that he knew how wrong. If he knew he was doing wrong, it does not matter that he was suffering

from delusions or hallucinations'("The Criminal Responsibility of the Alleged Insane" 315).

Debates over M'Naghten in the pre-war period clarified into a clash of professions. Between 1896 and 1913, two medical bodies formulated evidence which would come to the fore in the responsibility debates of the 1920s. The British Medical Association (BMA) and the Medico-Psychological Association (MPA) both recommended changes to the law: the BMA sided with Stephen and suggest adding an irresistible impulses clause to the Rules, while the MPA promoted complete practical and ideological reform. The MPA would overturn M'Naghten and remove the necessity for any strict test of responsibility, leaving the assessment of insanity to the judgement of the jury rather than the tenets of the law. Advised by medical witnesses, the jury would accept insanity as a defence as long as it could be proved that the crime was related to the mental disorder the defendant was suffering ("Criminal Responsibility" March 1923: 520). [5]

Allowing psychology such a central position in law worried defenders of the Rules, who were concerned that psychologists might come to the conclusion that only a mad person would think it reasonable to commit murder at all, thereby rendering all laws pertaining to homicide obsolete.[6] The straw-man nature of this argument is demonstrated by its scarce use amongst those actually pushing for legal reform during the period. However, it remained a pertinent premise both in the philosophy of law and of responsibility, and something that those speaking against the Rules felt the need to distance themselves from: 'We are not concerned to-day with the theorist and faddist doctrine that all who commit murder are insane' (641) Nicolson reassured his audience in a speech in 1913.

[5] As I refer to numerous articles with the same title I have included the publishing date in in-text citations.
[6] The possibility was mentioned specifically as a potential consequence of reform in House of Lords debates concerning possible changes to the law ("Criminal Responsibility (Trials) Bill").

Ronald True's Case (1922)

A major theme of the M'Naghten debates was the fear that merely unsettled, or even mentally healthy killers, should be let off – that is, sent to Broadmoor rather than be executed for their crimes. The trial of Ronald True in 1922 was a sensational apologue for the limits of such injustice. When True avoided the gallows he sparked a major public debate concerning M'Naghten as well as a confrontation between legal and medical practitioners, which nearly resulted in an overthrow of the existing laws on criminal responsibility and mental illness.

In a letter to the *Times* which responded to the newspaper's coverage of True's trial, Maurice Craig observed: 'The case of True clearly indicates the difference which exists between the legal and the medical point of view on matters of mental disorder' (8). Craig was writing days after True had been found guilty of wilful murder and sentenced to death for the murder of Gertrude Yates.[7] Yates had been found brutally strangled and beaten in her flat on the morning of the 6th March 1922, while True had been seen entering the property on the previous night and leaving in the morning shortly before Yates' body was found. Before he was arrested, he pawned a quantity of her jewellery and exchanged his blood-stained garments for a new suit with his tailor; when he was arrested, he still had in his pocket items of her jewellery, along with a cocked revolver.

There was little doubt that he was the killer, and there was ample evidence that he had attempted to evade detection. He told his tailor a fantastic story about an aeroplane crash to account for the blood, he asked his driver to pick him up from a different address than Yates' flat, and he told the police that he had left Yates arguing with a mysterious man a while after midnight on the night before her death. In the prosecution's construction of True, all of these details were taken as evidence that he was attempting, somewhat haphazardly, but nonetheless rationally, to escape justice, knowing as he must have done that he had committed a crime that was morally wrong

[7] "Woman Gagged and Murdered."; "News from Friday inquest."; "Ronald True On Trial."; Coroner and Ronald True 'Murder' Verdict."

and punishable by law. Sir Edward Muir, summing up the case for the prosecution at the first trial, portrayed True as a vain and aggressive man whose motivation was robbery. The defence, however, composed a portrait of a highly unstable man who had exhibited indications of mental disturbance since childhood. True's childhood cruelty to his pets, his fantastical bragging, episodes during which his mind would go blank (potentially caused by epilepsy, insanity and/or a serious morphine addiction) and a delusion in which he was being impersonated by another Ronald True were all considered at his trial (Crozier 124). A year prior to the killing, True had been admitted to a nursing home on two separate courses of care to be cured of morphine addiction, and was described by medical staff there as violent, suicidal and delusional (ibid.). True also frequently spoke of murder and had described to an acquaintance how his own mother had been beaten to death, ostensibly by the other 'True', in circumstances very similar to those in which Yates was found. True's mother was, however, still alive.

All of this anecdotal evidence of delusional insanity was supported by medical testimony from psychologists who had assessed him after the crime. Dr Norwood East, along with four other medical witnesses, declared that he would certify True as insane. To East, True seemed to be delusional on certain matters and extremely dangerous; Dr Young agreed and added that True was 'deficient in moral sense' and so 'incapable of controlling a number of acts'; Dr Robert Percy Smith was impressed by True's delusions and thought he had homicidal tendencies which were related to his previous morphine addiction; finally, Dr Stoddart agreed with the rest of the medical testimony and added that True was a pathological liar on the 'borderland of insanity,' although he disagreed with the suggestion being voiced in Court (although generally refuted by the medical witnesses) that True might be suffering from epilepsy and have committed the crime during an attack (all above quotations are from "Ronald True's Delusions" 7). His blank outs indicated epilepsy, although it was agreed that he had shown no other symptoms of the condition. The care he had taken over the crime ruled out automatism or an unpremeditated attack.

Although all four doctors agreed that they would certify True as insane, whether the specific conditions from which he was suffering rendered him irresponsible under M'Naghten was fiercely disputed. The judge presiding over the case, Mr Justice McCardie, described the Rules as involving a series of enquiries to the jury which would conclude with the following questions about the prisoner:

> Whether at the time [of committing the crime] he was aware of the physical character of the act he was doing? Whether or not he knew he was doing that which was morally wrong according to the code of his normal fellow-citizens? Whether he knew he was breaking the law? (ibid.)

This was the conventional interpretation of M'Naghten and consisted of enquiries into the defendant's knowledge of the physical quality of his actions, his knowledge of right of wrong, and his awareness of the position of the law on the matter. In their accounts of True, the medical witnesses offered different, although not altogether contradictory, testimony. One hospital assistant remarked that despite appearing definitely not sane in many of his actions, True did appear rational in conversation. Smith declared that 'the prisoner understood the nature of the act, but was incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong and was incapable of controlling his actions' (ibid.). Likewise, Young was certain that True appreciated the physical quality of the crime but 'did not think the prisoner appreciated the difference between right and wrong' (ibid.). Young added that 'the tests laid down in M'Naghten's case were inadequate; the word "wrong" was indefinite' (ibid.). True may have understood right and wrong, but his mental disturbance must have had an effect on how he experienced the feeling of 'wrongness'. Young's critique of 'wrong' as indefinite took into consideration the emotional aspects of cognisance, and which were missing from the law. As well as this criticism of the Rules, Young and Stoddart proposed that True was unable to control certain actions. This suggestion was taken up by the judge, and amounted to a move to expand M'Naghten in line with the recommendations of Stephens and the BMA regarding irresistible impulses: 'Even if the prisoner knew the physical nature of the act and that it was morally wrong and punishable by law, yet was by mental disease deprived of the power to control his

actions, then the verdict should be "Guilty, but Insane"' he advised ("Insanity and Responsibility for Crime" 892).

That True was found guilty and given the death penalty both at his trial and on appeal demonstrates how psychiatry and the law were in conflict. Although the defence, armed with its team of psychiatrists, had proved that True was insane according to the modern, medical definition, the prosecution managed to convince the jury that he was outside of the highly limited, legal definition of madness. It was decided that the lies True told about his movements on the night of the murder and his deviousness in covering his tracks proved he was not intellectually afflicted, and that his homicidal tendencies, delusions and blank outs were irrelevant to his crime. Even the proposal of an irresistible impulses clause, which had been discussed in law since the late nineteenth century did not influence the jury. True knew the nature of the act, and the difference between right and wrong. The fact that he was insane was seen to be irrelevant.

An intriguing addendum to this case was that True was not hanged, the punishment for murder at that time. Instead, he was consigned to Broadmoor, because contemporary laws forbid the execution of an insane man. The significance of the trial lay partly in the result of the case, with the public and press outrage expressed against True's 'reprieve' which was attributed to his 'influence in high circles' ("Murder and the Defence of Insanity" 246). As significant were the debates it raised regarding the implementation of M'Naghten and the use of psychiatric evidence in trials, which necessitated the establishment of a select committee charged with squaring the antiquated laws with modern medical understanding.

The Atkin Committee and Changes to the Law

In response to the controversy over True, a committee headed by Lord Justice Atkin was established in 1922 to consider changes to M'Naghten. The documents previously put together by the BMA and MPA constituted their medical evidence, with those aspects of both dealing with irresistible impulses and knowledge of right and wrong receiving much attention. Of particular relevance was the MPA's criticism of the M'Naghten Rules

as identifying ‘responsibility with knowing and reasoning’ which contradicted the many cases of criminals about

> whose insanity (and irresponsibility) there can be no possible doubt, who have realized the nature and quality of their act, have known that it was contrary to the law, human and divine, and have shown remarkable cleverness in carrying out their object. (“Criminal Responsibility” March 1923: 520)

The Rules were most mistaken, claimed the MPA, in their assessment of madness as a defect of reason, and instead they proposed a modernised definition of madness to replace the vague formulation reached by the questions posed in M’Naghten. It ran as follows:

> Unsoundness of mind is no longer regarded as in essence a disorder of the intellectual or cognitive faculties. The modern view is that it is something much more profoundly related to the whole organism – a morbid change in the emotional and instinctive activities, with or without intellectual derangement. Long before the patient manifests delusions or other signs of obvious insanity he may suffer from purely subjective symptoms, which are now recognized to be no less valid and of no less importance in the clinical picture of what constitutes unsoundness of mind than the more palpable and manifest signs of the fully developed disorder. (“Criminal Responsibility” Dec. 1923: 1060)

In the MPA’s view, mental illness did not always entail intellectual derangement or problems with reasoning; rather, choices and reasoning could be partially or profoundly affected by emotional and subjective imbalances, or not affected at all. Madness was not partial, however, in the sense that the criminal could still think rationally about certain things while suffering from unsoundness of mind: the whole organism, that is, the entire emotional life and judgement of the patient, should be assumed to be affected.

In the MPA’s report, the language used to describe the criminal also changed. While the BMA referred to the prisoner, the MPA preferred ‘patient’, showing an

inclination towards a therapeutic rather than punitive relationship with the criminal. The severity of the conditions necessary to determine irresponsibility was also softened: the symptoms need not ever get beyond basic subjective disturbances or develop into full disorders in order to be have a consequence on volition and cognition. It is likely that such a categorisation of mental illness would have meant more individuals would have been considered as having assuaged criminal responsibility due to their mental state.

In 1923, however, the Atkin Committee reported that only a minor change to the law would be necessary because the M'Naghten Rules were already flexible enough to accommodate a wide and expanding understanding of what constituted insanity and mental disease. There was a slight change of view with regard to loss of control and irresistible impulse in mental illness, and the committee sided with the BMA when they agreed that 'a person charged criminally with an offence is irresponsible for his act when the act is committed under an impulse which the prisoner was by mental disease in substance deprived of any power to resist,' in which cases it was accepted that 'the accused knows the nature of the act and that it is wrong; and the M'Naghten formula is not logically sufficient' (ibid. 1061). In other respects the Rules would stand, despite the Atkin Committee having decided to accept the modernised view of madness put forth by the reformist MPA. In doing so, the Committee noted that the concept of insanity had broadened from a specific disease of the intellect to a wider disorder of the sentiments and subjective life. Whether they were fully cognisant of the claims made by many supporters of change is questionable, as the report goes on to state that

> a person may be of unsound mind and yet be criminally responsible. If a person intends to do a criminal act, has the capacity to know what the act is, and to know the act is one he ought not to do, he commits a crime. (ibid. 1060-1)

The notion that morbid emotional disturbances might influence the way sufferers reasoned, their feelings about their actions, especially if their actions were violent, and subsequently, their grasp of right and wrong, was barely touched upon in the report.

In spite of the advice of the Atkin Committee, the attempt by Lord Justice Darling in 1923 to introduce a Bill to add an irresistible impulses clause to M'Naghten failed. Judging from the response of the Law Lords, the attempt to change the law seems to have touched a very raw nerve, amounting to a clash of the professions and the professional standards of both law and psychiatry. Alone, the idea that an aspect of the criminal justice system could do its business without a clear and timeless standard to assess mental states appeared highly subversive. This was all the more so when it was proposed that psychiatrists and not jurists should define the terms by which insanity was explained to the jury. According to Crozier, this:

> necessitated psychiatric opinion [be] given as expert testimony and also stressed the legal criteria for responsibility should not be the final authority … psychiatry would have the strongest role to play in the determination of the treatment of the insane criminal. (130)

In both the assessment of guilt and the determination of fit punishment, the incursion of modern psychiatric knowledge threatened the monopoly on justice maintained by jurists. A negative reaction to this can be seen in the response to True's residency in Broadmoor and his construction as a public figure of hate until his death in 1953. Psychiatry's involvement was seen by many as a means of True evading justice, rather than the fulfilment of a more suitable, psychiatrically-aware form of justice. In this somewhat crude confrontation, legal exactitude represents retaliatory justice, while psychiatric case-specificity represents a restorative approach to the criminal.

The perceived excesses of psychiatric case-by-case assessments can be seen in reactions to the incontrollable impulses clause. In proposing his Bill, Darling did his best to limit accusations that the clause would spare criminals whose actions were cruel and impulsive, rather than insane. In this spirit, 'such impulsives as the pyromaniac, the anonymous letter-writer, the morbid liar and poison-mixer' were all excluded ("Criminal Responsibility" 1924: 756). In Darling's public writings, his cynical attitude to the potential excesses of an impulses clause, especially when mental illness was questionable, is rather more apparent. In a short treatise he penned in 1925, he

acknowledged that ‘there are cases of mental disorder where the impulse to commit a criminal act recurs with increasing force until it is in fact uncontrollable,’ (Darling 17) whilst he mocked the defence of temporary insanity and uncontrollable impulse in minor cases. Particularly amusing is the case of the rich woman found ‘with her muff full of lace and chocolate’ at Selfridges, who claims that she ‘has lost in the war a dearly-loved cousin, or in Bond Street, a favourite dog, and momentarily, her memory’ (18-19). The defence, described as such by Darling, sounds ridiculous, but while it may attest to the exploitation of insanity defences at this time, so to may it be seen as a conservative reaction to the more multifaceted and emotionally-founded psychological conditions and their manifestations. Insanity pleas seemed to many to threaten the role of criminal law and punishment as a deterrent against anti-social acts, and indeed Lord Hewitt, who was critical of uncontrollable impulses as a defence, was reported in 1926 as saying that, ‘one of the most important functions of the law is to make people control their impulses’ (“Insanity and the Law” 714).

The Aftermath of Atkin

Complaints against the conservative rejection of the Bill came from both the medical and legal professions, and many were not satisfied with the persistence of what they saw as the irrelevant, unscientific and haphazard basis of M’Naghten. As well as the obvious legal difficulties the Rules presented, some psychiatrists felt that the Atkin Committee had not sufficiently encouraged the law to accept modern definitions of madness, despite demonstrating its willingness to question the categories of mad and sane, normal and pathological, and to understand how relatively minor changes or imbalances in instinctive and subjective life could result in morally abnormal actions. In 1926, Dr T. B. Hyslop made the pressing point that ‘[it] must be recognized that there were conditions of irresponsibility not due to certifiable disease’ (“Insanity and the Law”). The Atkin Committee and Darling’s Bill had represented a tentative move beyond the standard definition of delusions as insanity, but had been conservative in their definitions of insanity itself. Psychoneurotic disturbances such as obsessional neurosis, character

disorder, psychopathic personality disorder and hysteria did not qualify as limiting criminal responsibility because of the continuing ambiguity caused by the wording of M'Naghten, in particular its clause not to know the nature and quality of the act. As Whitlock complains:

> Unfortunately, such a theory takes no account of the emotional concomitants of knowledge; and it is surely the emotional coldness or detachment of the schizophrenic, who may kill without any particular feeling of horror or apparent awareness of the likely consequences to his victim or himself, which makes this interpretation of 'knowing' inadequate. (33-4)

As well as failing to match advances in psychology, the Rules failed in their objective to provide a definition of insanity which could be used in trials to test the responsibility of prisoners, because even by the late 1930s, judges were still unclear about what insanity actually was. In this confusion, they were little aided by psychologists and psychiatrists, who were engaged in their own debates over the primacy of competing theories of mind. In 1922, one commentator had observed that '[i]nsanity has never been legally defined, and no even tolerable medical definition has ever been given' (Smith 11), and in 1938, *R. v. Phillips* demonstrated that schizophrenia was still only partially accepted as insanity, due to the general ability of sufferers to judge right from wrong. In this case, a student murdered a boy after fantasising about killing, and afterwards was indifferent, distracted and unemotional in reminiscing about his crime. That he was judged guilty but insane was a rarity, and was even more remarkable given that one medical witness had advised that he 'did not consider Phillips insane, though he was certainly a person of abnormal mind' ("Successful Defence" 1031). That he was not insane was still being assessed according to his ability to grasp right and wrong. A conflicting account by the second medical witness convinced the jury that the prisoner was insane.

While the protocol around M'Naghten was relatively well established, the content and focus of medical evidence and its meaning when interpreted by judges and juries continued to vary throughout the period. The sense of the ambiguity, dissonance

and the contextual mutability of judgements concerning insanity that this variability created is often reflected upon in the golden age crime novel.

Psychoanalysis?

While psychoanalytic perspectives inform much of Gladys Mitchell's writing, psychoanalytic critiques did not feature in many interwar discussions of M'Naghten, nor in the discussions of the Atkin Committee. The stance of the Lords, who debated and refused to pass Darling's Criminal Responsibility (Trials) Bill in 1924, is exemplary, and is best summarised in the statement that it would be best to avoid admitting to law a doctrine which accepted 'the sinister mysteries of the unconscious mind' ("Criminal Responsibility of the Insane" 923).

A rare psychoanalytic attempt to uncover the mental impulses behind crime and recognise them in current laws can be found in M. Hamblin Smith's *The Psychology of the Criminal* (1922). Smith accepts a number of general factors that contribute to crime, including heredity, poverty, bad environment and low intelligence, and yet concludes that these factors should not be considered generally, but rather in their impact upon the individual psychology of criminals. Most significant to Smith are mental conflicts, which are capable of causing people from a variety of different backgrounds and possessing more or less of the so-called 'criminal' traits, to commit crime. Smith defers to Bernard Hart for his definition of complexes as 'a system of connected ideas with a strong emotional tone, and a tendency to produce actions of a certain definite character' (qtd. in Smith 69). Psychoanalytic concepts drawn from a relatively orthodox reading of Freud including repression, complexes, and the atavistic instinctual drives of the primary unconscious, are seen to affect individual action, and hence responsibility. Having dismissed the 'medieval' conception of volition as an act of 'free will' and crime therefore as 'wickedness' (13) Smith proposes that Freud's hypothesis of the unconscious can explain why certain acts are committed, especially when they seem to be irrational. Smith relates how the energy associated with a repressed complex may cause a person to act in a certain way, without them knowing that the source of their

volition lies in their consciously resisted desires. Instead, they may have rationalised their action for themselves and attributed their intentions to a supposedly reasonable objective. To Smith, the 'underlying motive[s]' (71) behind actions make problematic the notion of pure intention, as does the assertion that primitive instincts form the basis of the unconscious, and thus make the root of much action pre-social and instinctual at core: 'far more of our psychic life than was once supposed' claims Smith, 'and more than many persons are even now willing to recognize, results from the action of these instincts,' namely, sex, self-preservation, herding and self-nutrition (75).

According to A.G. Tansley, the mind's 'most fundamental activities are non-rational and largely unconscious activities. The power of conscious reasoning is a later development, playing but a minor part, even in the most highly developed human being' (24). A theory of rational volition is made problematic when sane individuals, or those who are merely slightly unstable without being fully insane, can be seen either to be acting in conflict with conscious reason, or to be using reason to rationalise action inspired by instinctual drives which were otherwise forbidden full expression by the super-ego. The psychiatric establishment's resistance to such a hypothesis, in Smith's reading, demonstrates an unwillingness to concede to a theory of human consciousness based upon non-rational action, an unknowable unconscious self and dynamic instinctual drives. Certainly, the consequences of a confrontation between the hypothesis of unconscious drives and primal instincts with a criminal law formulated to judge responsibility for crime according to *mens rae* – the guilty mind – are profound. Firstly, because the conscious mind resists unconscious conflicts and complexes, knowing one's own mind and motives and reasoning clearly about them are impossible tasks (without the help of an analyst, of course). Secondly, the fundamental drive of the primitive instincts, coupled with the innumerable resistances they meet in civilised society, make complexes, repressions and conflicts the norm rather than the exception (Tansley 15). Consequently, it will be difficult to determine who is to blame for the existence of conflicts, especially when they result in criminal action.

For Smith, this speculation leads on to a more profound point, and one which he discusses at length. '[O]ur every action,' Smith asserts,

> is determined by the circumstances which exist at the moment, together with the whole mass of former experiences, whether remembered or forgotten … Every action which we perform, without exception, as well as every precedent mental process, is the only one which could possibly occur under the particular circumstances. (76)

When the psychological, biological, environmental and intellectual aspects of the criminal are correlated with the specific circumstances of the crime, little space is left for the notion of the criminal as an isolated moral agent acting according to their own free will. Every action – including crime, even murder – becomes the only possible solution to the complex formula of individual circumstances.

The problems for M'Naghten raised by Smith's treatise are evident. If complexes and conflicts constitute an inseparable component of normal mental life, the perimeters of insanity become excessively difficult to determine: Smith's expansive, seemingly limitless definitions of insanity (see 11), as well as his dismissal of 'an entity called the "will"' (9) as unscientific, undermines M'Naghten's reliance upon behaviour according to knowledge of right and wrong, and the role of delusions in defining insanity. More threateningly to a legal and psychiatric establishment in varying degrees antagonistic to psychoanalysis, Smith's recommendations for reforming M'Naghten cedes greater power to the analyst in determining the severity of the condition the patient suffers, something both the MPA and BMA were cautious about in their advice to the Atkin Committee. While Smith does accept that medical witnesses should have a merely advisory role (12), the intrinsically obscure nature of the insights offered by depth psychology, as well as its tendency to pathologise a multitude of social acts and mental states, might lead (as those opposed to reform feared) to an explosion of insanity pleas involving non-debilitating mental illnesses defined by complexes and conflicts.

The most important statement made by Smith from the perspective of M'Naghten is the clarification he suggests to the Rules, that '[n]o act done by a person in a state of

insanity, or suffering from mental defect, to such a degree as to justify his being placed under care, treatment, and control, can be punished as an offence' (12). In comparison with the extant phrasing of the Rules, the shift he proposes is significant, both because of the miscellany of conditions becoming treatable according to psychoanalytic principles (kleptomania included) and because of the ambiguities of the term 'under care': clearly he is referring to lesser degrees of therapeutic custody than is enforced upon the inhabitants of lunatic asylums. Recalling Tansley's divide between the normal and abnormal mind, an interpretive space opens up in which the exact relationship between responsibility, moral sense and pathology becomes less of a contentious issue than that of what kinds of troubles merit care and treatment – an interpretive space over which psychologists undoubtedly would have precedence. A clash of the professions, already prevalent in the M'Naghten debates, is anticipated by Smith's proposal, as well as a radical revision of the incentives that underlie punishment. Elsewhere in his study, Smith proposes that the retaliatory and deterrent objectives of punishment should be superseded by the reformatory principle (4), following which the offender should be seen as an object of study, largely a victim of their own complex psychology, and potentially reclaimable by analysis. The greater the number of offenders judged to be irresponsible because of their insanity, the greater the potential for such reformative action.

Case Studies

Irresistible impulses, maniacal obsessions, complexes and the irrationality of motivation all posed problems to the M'Naghten Rules, representing as they did the psychological theories of early Victorian psychiatry. It was at the points of conflict and disagreement generated by the proliferation of psychoanalytic and more emotional and subjectively sensitive British psychologies that crime writers probed M'Naghten, and from which they composed characters who function as case studies of responsible or irresponsible insanity. In Mitchell's *The Saltmarsh Murders* (1932) and *St Peter's Finger* (1938) and Brand's *Green for Danger* (1945), very modern cases of murderous insanity demonstrate

the complexities of responsibility and highlight the shortcomings of contemporary legal definitions of madness. In Mitchell's psychoanalytic detective, who offers murderers the chance of redemption through her expert guidance, and in Brand's portrayal of bereaved characters who conspire to conceal the offender from formal legal justice, can be discerned the rise of a specialised moral and psychiatric perspective on criminal responsibility. The adoption of an ethical stance towards the criminal at the dénouement forms an important component of these plots, distinguishing them from the many golden age novels in which the murderer is arrested and a just punishment is inferred.

Gladys Mitchell, *St Peter's Finger* (1938)

The psychological expertise employed in the investigation of *St Peter's Finger*'s killer, Ulrica, has been discussed already in chapter one. Suffering from competing complexes, Ulrica is a prime study for investigation in the manner outlined by M. Hamblin Smith. According to Bradley's psychoanalytic understanding, Ulrica can certainly be considered insane. However, whether she would be protected from punishment according to the M'Naghten Rules is far less clear. This interpretive disparity is a central theme of the novel, and informs the juxtaposed trajectory of another mentally unbalanced criminal. This is Sister Bridget, in whose portrayal Mitchell highlights the problems raised by M'Naghten in the judgement of Ulrica's case.

In her early appearances in the novel, Sister Bridget seems to be suffering from an inborn mental and physical disability. She is described as 'the half-witted lay-sister, with her dead-white, puffy face, upon which was a calculating, slightly leering expression'; she has a 'shuffling, lop-sided walk' and 'the heavy, ungainly movements of the mentally enfeebled' (125). This is consistent with Edwardian and interwar accounts of genetic conditions which were understood as manifestations of degeneracy: she has much in common with the suspect of Chesterton's "The Hammer of God," the 'idiot' who most likely was born with what would later be classified as Down's Syndrome, and in the interwar period was referred to as 'Mongolism' out of a mistaken association of the condition with Mongolian heredity. Contrary to this physical report, she is instead

suffering from a mental trauma, the root of which is the experience of being trapped in a burning building many years previously. Even without an understanding of Freud, it is clear to all that she is mentally unwell and, as the sisters point out, well beyond recovery. A Freudian interpretation of her condition is offered nonetheless, and Bradley concludes that she never fully recovered from her trauma (the term 'abreaction' is not used, but it is implied, see Mitchell 351). Her fascination with matches functions as an unconscious communicator of this fact despite her senseless state.

Sister Bridget's room is located in close proximity to where the victim, Ursula, was found, but from the outset the nuns are careful not to put her forward as a suspect. This in itself is striking: the possibility that a raving lunatic could have committed the crime seems less ridiculous, after all, in a novel in which a lunatic does happen to live within a corridor's length of the crime scene. Despite the convenience of such a solution, psychoanalytic techniques, including word-association and hypnosis, are used by Mrs Bradley to test and dismiss Sister Bridget's possession of even 'the slightest degree of guilty knowledge' (127). Contrary to Darling's scepticism (and indeed, Freud's), Bradley's application of psychoanalysis to the matter of crime is presented as infallible, and so Sister Bridget is quickly but decisively acquitted of Ursula's murder. Instead, she has another 'crime' to commit: arson.

Mitchell gives a close account of the mind-set of Sister Bridget as she unconsciously sets the convent's orphanage on fire whilst looking for a mouse she treats as a pet: 'She was aware of vague cravings, and these crystallised themselves, at about half-past eleven, into a violent desire for the companionship of her mouse' (331). She stumbles around igniting matches to light her way, which she then drops carelessly on the floor. Her actions are described as both automatic and instinctive, they are a 'pilgrimage, which could be taken without thought' (332). She acts 'like a baby' and forgets 'half-way, what it was she was going to do' (ibid.). Flitting around in a state of confusion and forgetfulness, her distinct and reccurring desires for matches and for her mouse drive her actions, but only in a state of considerable disorientation. It has previously been made clear that Sister Bridget has a limited understanding of her

surrounding environment and its dangers – when her bed is set alight by an unknown assailant, she dances in the midst of the fire that Bradley is trying to put out (205). This obliviousness to physical dangers contributes to her starting the fire and makes it impossible to imagine that she was deliberately reckless in dropping the matches, or had intended to cause a disaster.

Under Mrs Bradley's guidance, and as a consequence of the reiterated shock of being trapped in a fire, Sister Bridget makes a complete recovery. Her culpability for the fire is not an issue, and it is made absolutely clear that, although she was in effect guilty of the act of starting the fire, the action was not criminal due to her incapacitated mental state and her severe disorientation. She had no idea what she was doing and, although the lives of a number of children were put at risk, she is not criminally responsible for starting the fire. Although it enriches her portrayal, a belief in Freud's theory of the unconscious would not be necessary to return a clear verdict of 'guilty but insane'; and so, if she were brought to trial, she would be well within the limits of M'Naghten.

The significance of this incident concerns its juxtaposition with Ulrica's crime and her treatment at the dénouement. After Bradley explains the details of the case (outlined in chapter 1) she announces that, rather than handing Ulrica over to the police, she has helped her evade legal justice by sending her out of the country. Refusing the containment and closure usually associated with the golden age dénouement, Bradley's decision is based upon psychological understanding of Ulrica's state of mind when committing the crime and Bradley's intimate knowledge of the attitude of the law to such forms of insanity. Although Ulrica acted intentionally, even deviously, in murdering her cousin, her actions were guided by a mental illness no less real than Sister Bridget's. However, she has a clear sense of right and wrong and she knew full well what she was doing when she murdered her cousin. Although she is suffering from a delusion – that the money given to the convent would do penance for her family's atheism – were this delusion real, this would be an acquisitive motivation rather than something justifiable like self-defence, and her actions would still be a crime. Ulrica would certainly be held

responsible for her crime according to the doctrine of partial insanity and the aspect of M'Naghten which saw insanity as a defect of reason.

The tension of the professions is manifest in Bradley's decision to trust her own assessment of Ulrica's condition and allow her psychological expertise to pre-empt a legal expertise perhaps incapable of understanding the subtleties of Ulrica's case. Further weight is added to this reading by the conversation she has with her son Ferdinand, a leading criminal lawyer, who is aghast at his mother's decision to leave Ulrica to her own devices. However, as Bradley prognosticates, Ulrica 'will never commit another crime' (348) and may very likely one day forget 'that the death was due to her agency' (347). Bradley's therapeutic alternative for Ulrica reflects a combative approach to the penalizing inclination of M'Naghten and of criminal lunacy case law, which divided the responsible from the irresponsible, dehumanised the killer, and made stark divides between aspects and states of mind that were complex and often misunderstood.

It is interesting, given that her decision to acquit Ulrica is based upon the girl's insanity, that Bradley describes Ulrica as 'perfectly sane,' and explains that '[h]er tragedy was that she had a single-track mind, as the vulgar have it. If that mind held two very powerful basic ideas, it followed that those ideas must be in conflict' (348). Although Ulrica is clearly not of sound mind – *compos mentis* – she is to an extent reasoning clearly and on relatively sound principles, and it is this fact which puts her in conflict with M'Naghten. The two ideas which are in conflict in Ulrica's mind are her underlying atheism and her fervent belief in God, neither of which can be described as insane (despite Bradley's frequent comparison of Christianity to tribal myth, it is not portrayed as pathological). Bearing in mind that the two powerful ideas, both secular and spiritual, from which Ulrica reasons, are both reasonable, she is not described by Bradley as insane, but rather deeply conflicted. That Bradley decides not to pursue Ulrica suggests that contemporary legal and punitive practices were unsophisticated in relation to the mentally unwell, and certainly not capable of addressing the kind of pathologies suffered by Ulrica. The principle that Ursula's murder should be avenged

and her murderer brought to justice are notably absent from Bradley's reasoning, demonstrating a rejection of both the trope of containment through punishment implicit in the classic clue-puzzle dénouement and, in unison with Mitchell's attitude in other novels, a negation of all forms of punishment. This was the kind of attitude lamented by Lord Justice Darling, absent from the law and responsible for much justified hype at the time of True's trial. In *St Peter's Finger*, it amounts to an attack on the spirit of the insanity plea laws and on their psychological foundations.

Gladys Mitchell, *The Saltmarsh Murders* (1932)

Bradley certainly airs some unconventional opinions about killers in Mitchell's other novels. As well as claiming that everyone could be a killer in the right circumstances (in agreement with Smith's formula), in *The Saltmarsh Murders* (125) she suggests that murder is really not such a serious crime, or rather, not so abnormal, because it is so frequently the consequence of conflicts between primal instincts and social norms, or of conflicts between complexes, as in Ulrica's case. *The Saltmarsh Murders* (1932) was the first of Mitchell's novels to allow Mrs Bradley centre stage, and it reads very much as a launching of the analyst-detective, with copious references to insanity of the hereditary, neurotic, homicidal and also purely comical varieties. In the small coastal village of Rotherhithe, Meg Tossick, an unmarried and pregnant servant, is strangled. Incestuous partnerships, primitive taboos and mental ill-health abound. The prime suspect is Meg's ex-lover and the potential father of the baby, Bob Candy, who is also Meg's half-brother; both were born to separate mothers who were each raped by an escaped lunatic from the local asylum (making this one of the few novels to actually feature such a figure). As the narrator muses: 'there was that unfortunate affair of the escaped lunatic in the middle of his family tree. I mean, it seems as though this game of strangling young females is a proper lunatic's trick, and Bob Candy's ancestry told against him somewhat heavily' (100). However, as in many golden age crime novels, the murderer does not come from the degenerate working classes, epitomised by Bob, but from the domestic and moral locus of the village, the vicarage.

Throughout the novel, the vicar's wife, Mrs Coutts, terrorises the young with her crusade against immorality. She prowls around the village after dark in search of canoodling couples, she accuses the narrator, a young curate, of behaving improperly with her niece, and she sees the unmarried Meg's fate as a just and convenient end to a scandal. To a degree this is a self-interested cruelty, as she is quite explicit in accusing her husband, the vicar, of fathering the child, a suspicion which Bradley suggests is 'a sign of subconscious jealousy' (57). Although Bradley states early in the novel that she suspects Mrs Coutts is the murderer, and charts how her 'nerves and temper had been steadily deteriorating since the murder of Meg Tossick' (108), Bradley's analysis of Coutts is represented as a comical sub-plot, too insignificant to be a red herring. Other more rational motivations, including self-protection and jealousy, are considered as more likely motives than a sexual complex in a prudish old woman.

The representation of Coutts's mental state as tangential is the fault of the narrator, the Watsonian curate Noel Wells, who reproduces popular conservative discourses of doubt about, and good humoured resistance to, psychoanalysis. Bound up with this there is an embarrassed recoil from issues concerning female sexuality itself, especially when mediated by the aged, female and startlingly attired Bradley. The purpose of Wells as sidekick and narrator is primarily to misread the evidence, thereby constructing the structurally necessary false solution, and in doing so to demonstrate the superior expertise of the detective as specialist observer, privy to knowledge that the ordinary individual lacks. In Žižek's words, the naïve companion is necessary 'precisely because he is an ordinary man who embodies what we would call the field of *doxa*, spontaneous common opinion' (175). This is represented perfectly in Wells' reactions to Bradley's psychologist's 'argot' (126), which range from the awkward to the scandalised and, just occasionally, the somewhat impressed. Reading against the grain of the psychological solution that can be expected from Mitchell, Wells' interpretation of events issues at times from nineteenth century and *fin de siècle* romance tropes found in writers like Robert Louis Stevenson and John Buchan. Harking back to a simpler, golden era – albeit a disturbingly violent one – Wells laments the passing of an age in which the

local smuggler would have been receiving contraband alcohol, rather than pornography (122), and when an attractive adulteress would have been murdered by her blackmailed lover, rather than an elderly sexual neurotic (267). The discrediting of psychological evidence within the novel can be seen as an expression of popular opinion, the *doxa*, which can no longer be relied upon as a means through which to reveal the truth of the crime.

Wells resists the conclusions of psychology, and in doing so prefigures the attitude of the contemporary legal system. Rather than being an irrelevance within a novel geared towards symbolic closure, the investigation anticipates the moment in which evidence and criminal must be passed over to an executive authority – the police – followed by the criminal justice system. Nonetheless, it is the contemporary legal system's investment in a conflicting epistemology that renders the psychoanalytic detective powerless. When asked why she cannot tell the police of her suspicions, Bradley explains that, although she has proof – 'Plenty, psychological speaking' – she also has, '[n]one, speaking in the language of the police' (177). Likewise, she claims that 'up to the present I have no proof except psychological proof (which is incontrovertible but not acceptable yet to the lay nor the legal mind)' (120). Bradley's complaints issue from the assumption that medical evidence of this kind is an invalid basis for arrest or conviction. She speaks from experience, for Bradley has herself been a medical witness in trials, and in solidarity with doctors qualified in more respected disciplines, notes, 'I never disagree with expert witness upon principle' (218). This concession of judgement, at least in regards to psychology, was not guaranteed in contemporary trials. Such was the case in True's trial, in which the evidence of four psychological witnesses was evaded through strict implementation of M'Naghten, and in the subsequent post-Atkin legislation, which failed to raise the standing of psychological evidence in court.

The resistance of this nexus of institutions to Bradley's psychoanalytic reasoning cannot be overcome with the detective's standard show of bravado at the dénouement, when even the most sceptical characters are supposed to be convinced by the detective's deductive superiority. Indeed, Bradley is so confident that Coutts will be judged unfairly

according to legal principles rather than psychological ones that she adopts an extra-legal policy to help her evade the judiciary altogether. Ironically, Bradley's extra-legal policy relies entirely upon her psychological expertise for its success. Her strategy is quite literally to shock Coutts to death; this she achieves at the dénouement through outlining the details of the false solution, convincing those assembled that this was the real turn of events, while simultaneously working Coutts into a state of acute nervous tension. Her heart, as Bradley subsequently relates, was weak, and 'her nervous system has been in a state of attrition for years,' (274) a physical condition entwined inextricably with her neurotic state. By turning on Coutts suddenly, Bradley sends her into a faint which is quickly followed by what appears to be a heart attack. Although Bradley, in Wells' words, 'did all the things that people in the know do do' (272), Coutts is briskly pronounced deceased. As medical authority, Bradley administers first aid and signs the death certificate; as legal authority, she both judges Coutts and executes her, and it is in this latter function that she pronounces a moral judgement upon the laws that she herself breaks in committing the murder.

It is already clear that Bradley is willing to break the law. Earlier in the novel she has made the extraordinary admission that 'I actually have a murder to my credit. I was tried for it and acquitted, but I did it boys and girls, I did it' (120). That Bradley is able to manipulate the outcome of a trial even when she is guilty of the crime suggests, of course, the dangers of ignoring her expertise, psychological or otherwise. It also demonstrates the sincerity of her re-evaluative mission, as neither the laws nor the mores that accompany and sustain them are outside of her reformative project. She shares a number of her controversial opinions within *The Saltmarsh Murders*, including a defence of incest (a taboo inherited from 'the Jewish code of morals' 274); illegitimate parentage ('I didn't know people bothered about such things nowadays' [281]); adultery (definitely not a sin [216]); and murder ('if it *is* a crime' [125]) and inter-racial couplings, which is, regrettably, the most controversial of all because of the prevalent racism of the villagers. Bradley's critical moral code permits her to flout the *doxa* at these most charged points. It also justifies her in killing Coutts, and it is in this act that Mitchell encodes an attack

upon M'Naghten. As Bradley explains, 'I had to choose between killing her through shock, or as an alternative. … [l]etting her stand her trial' (272-3). Whether or not Coutts will be judged guilty but insane is uncertain. Bradley describes Coutts' condition as 'a bad case of sadism plus inverted nymphomania' (281), a condition unlikely to be covered under the present law, despite Bradley's explicit assertion that 'poor, woman, she is not responsible for her actions' (283). In her notebooks, Bradley tries to predict the likely outcome of the trial: '*I don't want the poor woman to be hanged*' she exclaims (Mitchell's italics, 287). 'If she isn't hanged she will be sent to Broadmoor' (ibid.), paralleling True's fate and evoking the controversy of his continued residence at the institution.

Coutt's trial is of course never held, but a clarification of Mitchell's position on the likelihood of Coutts being sent to Broadmoor can be found in her later novel, *Laurels are Poison* (1942). The murderer in this novel, the teacher Miss Murchan, is sexually 'morbid' (234) like Coutts. The motivation for her crimes lies in punishing her half-sister for having a relationship, and subsequently a child, with a man with whom they both were in love. Miss Murchan, libidinally, is the inverse of Coutts: she suffers from too much attachment to a loved object rather than an introversion. Miss Murchan's tenacity in committing the crime and vengeful motivation combine to put her outside the meaning of the act. As much is said explicitly in the novel:

> "Is she mad?" whispered the Principle. Mrs Bradley shrugged.
>
> "In your view and in mine, certainly," she replied. "According to the law, poor soul, I strongly doubt it." (228)

It is not necessary for Bradley to intervene, as she does with Coutts, because Miss Murchan poisons herself shortly after she is captured. As is frequently the case in golden age crime novels, when the detective has scruples about presenting a killer for punishment, suicide is a painless and convenient alternative. Justice is still done, in the sense that the killer is 'executed'. They no longer pose a threat to others, and narrative closure is achieved through their obliteration. Dorothy L. Sayers, who was unique in focusing in depth upon the agonies of the detective responsible for sending a killer to his

death in *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937), allowed her detective to offer suicide to repentant killers in both *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1921) and *Murder Must Advertise* (1933). The detective's role as arbiter of justice, at least in a formal sense, is compromised, perhaps, but their personal moral code is unthreatened. It is no coincidence that Sayers' aristocratic detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, offers suicide to the killers in the latter two novels specifically because it is the gentlemanly alternative to exposing their families to public scrutiny and scandal. In a comparable way, it is Bradley's code of practice as a psychologist that most defines her sense of morality, although unlike Wimsey, she poses a threat to the status quo in protecting her insane killers from a legal system that to both detective and criminal appears antipathetic.

In an extraordinary passage in *The Saltmarsh Murders*, Bradley outlines a theory of law and the criminal, asserting (somewhat in keeping with the reformists Lord Darling criticised) that 'most murderers are insane at the time of committing the murder' (126). To illustrate this she refers to Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen, one of the most famous murderers of the long-Edwardian era, who was convicted in 1910 of poisoning and then dismembering his wife (see Young). Dr Crippen's notoriety was the effect of a case combining morbid details, an international pursuit, ropey disguises, the use of telegrams, the involvement of the strongwoman Vulcana, a love triangle and a positively macabre cognomen, and it is somewhat in conflict with contemporary perceptions of Crippen as a master villain to describe him, as Bradley does, as 'the victim of an inferiority complex,' (126). It is also strange that Bradley cites Patrick Mahon, the so-called Crumbles murderer, in order to demonstrate that most murderers are insane when committing their crime.[8] Mahon's victim was his girlfried, the pregnant Emily Kaye, whose corpse had been dismembered over the course of two weeks in 1924 and was found in a secluded seaside cottage the couple had rented. That the crime was premeditated was proved by the fact that, prior to the murder, Mahon had purchased a knife and a saw. He already had a criminal background, having committed fraud and been imprisoned previously for

[8] The Crumbles case is also referred to, obliquely, in Mitchell's *When Last I Died* (1941): after the execution of Mahon, the bungalow was bought by investors who charged interested tourists for guided tours of the house and crime scene. Likewise, Bradley's investigation centres on a house which, following a death, has been turned into a tourist attraction.

a bank raid and, incredibly, he brought another girlfriend to stay at the cottage for the weekend while Kaye's body was still *in situ* (see Browne and Tullett). Reading Mahon as anything other than a devious and self-interested killer, intent on escaping the relationship and the consequences of Kaye's pregnancy (Mahon was married already and was a father), would have been controversial. It is therefore unclear why Mitchell refers to this case, which did not involve an insanity plea, when she could as easily have mentioned the still highly contested guilty verdict in True's case. One possible reason is that the medical witness in both Crippen's and Mahon's trials was the theatrical Home Office pathologist Sir Bernard Spilsbury. Spilsbury had become a well-known public figure as a consequence of the empathetic performances, rhetorical flourishes and gruesome details he provided while discussing autopsies in court. Spilsbury's idiosyncratic interpretation of medical evidence and conservative social views led, it has been argued, to a number of miscarriages of justice, (see Rose passim) and by the 1930s, when Mitchell published *The Saltmarsh Murders*, public and legal opinion was turning against Spilsbury. His role as pathologist was to advise on forensic evidence, and as such he gave no advice upon the mental state of the killer: still, it is possible that Bradley's reinterpretation of the verdict of the Crumbles Murders taps into a wider anxiety about verdicts in Spilsbury's past cases. It certainly would suggest a degree of irony in her statement that she never disagrees with medical witnesses upon principle.

Alternatively, the suggestion that such infamous villains are victims of psychology may draw strength from popular perceptions of their depravity. It may be read as a symptom of secularisation, whereby criminality could no longer be accounted for according to religious moral codes of temptation and sin. Psychological explanations for such shocking transgressions as Mahon's and Crippen's crimes were at least preferable to confronting the possibility that such criminals were sane and had reasoned clearly upon that course of action. The theory that all murderers are insane performs something of a reassuring function, and indeed few of Mitchell's novels feature a murderer who is not at least slightly unhinged (even if it is only the *petite hysterie* of Muriel in Mitchell's 1941 mystery, *When Last I Died*). Whether they should all come

within the protection of the law is questionable. On Mahon, Bradley is clear to distinguish between 'the two acts of the unfortunate man' (126): the murder itself, and the subsequent destruction of the body. Although Bradley ignores the premeditated nature of the crime (Mahon's visit to the ironmonger's specifically), she draws a clear distinction between a murderer's mental state at the time of the murder and ostensibly rational measures they take to conceal the body and crime afterwards. She states:

> If a man laid an entirely false trail for the police, misled them, hoodwinked them, drew red herrings across the track and dived and doubled in order to escape them, you wouldn't say that he was any more of a villain than if he took no steps to secure himself from arrest, would you? … Well, a man who dismembers a body and hides the head is only trying to secure himself against arrest. (126-7)

The distinction Bradley draws here is highly topical, especially as True's insanity was doubted because of the rational steps he took to conceal his presence at Yate's flat after her murder. Bradley's argument closely relies upon distinctions drawn both at True's trial and subsequent legislation, as she asks whether the relatively reasonable steps a murderer might take to secure themselves against arrest afterwards should alter the way in which the crime itself, and the state of mind of the criminal while they committed it, are judged. While in the extract above Bradley talks of villainy, the argument is applied just as readily to insanity. Although the medical voices who supported True made no such argument, instead explaining his behaviour after the murder as consistent with his insanity, Bradley's consideration of the fractured nature of individual experience, the ways in which states of mind could overlap and engulf one another, and most importantly the co-existence of reason and immorality in insanity, provide an important and original contribution to the M'Naghten debate.

Christianna Brand, *Green for Danger* (1945)

Brand's mystery is set in a rural hospital during the Second World War, with many patients falling victim to German aerial bombardments. Its cast of six suspects is drawn from the medical staff who attended to Joseph Higgins, a man who had been injured in an air raid and whose death during a routine operation is treated as suspicious. He dies as a result of suffocation – the murderer has painted a gas canister green and supplied it to the anaesthetist as oxygen. The murders which follow are as resourceful and devious, and it is clear that the murderer would have killed many more of the cast to protect herself if the detective had not confronted her in time. However, at the novel's resolution, the murderer Esther, is forgiven for her crimes, not by the detective, but by the former suspects and her near-victims. They react to the detective's unveiling of her guilt not with anger or relief, but pity. Because Esther suffers from a mental illness brought about by grief, the medically trained cast intuitively and professionally acknowledge her reduced responsibility. This creates a schism during the dénouement scene, as the detective attempts to enforce legal codes that the medical cast know to be flawed. In contrast with the figure of the medically astute forensic detective described by Thomas – the 'master diagnostician, an expert capable of reading the symptoms of criminal pathology in the individual body and the social body as well' (3) – Brand's detective Inspector Cockrill gives only a partial reading of Esther, failing to acknowledge the severity of her mental anguish and its relation to her crime. He also fails in his diagnosis of the social body, misinterpreting Esther's crime as an isolated instance of criminal pathology. He attempts to cure society by containing and punishing her, only to be told forcefully by the group that systemic social problems will not be cured by ostracising one troubled individual. Her mental condition has been fostered by social disadvantage in an oppressive nexus of familial and gender norms, and is now in confrontation with an uncomprehending legal system. Rejecting the resolution of the detective, the dénouement diminishes the authority of this figure and offers a critique of the conventional social morality he tries to enforce.

Sympathy with Esther is encouraged throughout the novel, although her portrayed as a gentle and dedicated nurse. In her late twenties and unemployed, Esther decides to escape from her home and her demanding, hypochondriac mother to find work in the hospital, only to experience insufferable grief and guilt when her mother dies in a collapsed building after an air raid. Esther's mental health deteriorates as a consequence of her loss and as a reaction against the sterility of her early life, as she realises that her freedom from the oppressive family home has been bought at a devastating cost. Brand draws on Freud's writings on ambivalence and mourning in "Mourning and Melancholia" in the construction of Esther's self-reproach. She also portrays Esther as a repressed-virgin and sexual neurotic with a mother-complex which could come straight from Freud's writings on paranoia in sexual neurosis (see "A Case of Paranoia").

Esther's mental anguish is converted into deadly vengeance when she realises that a hospital patient is the head of the air raid rescue team who, after many days of digging, decided to stop searching for her mother. The subsequent murders Esther commits are dependent upon her belief that her actions from the start have been a form of natural justice. The natural justice delusion has been encountered before in Christie's *And Then There Were None*, in which the killer, Justice Wargrave, is treated with very little sympathy. Yet at the close of *Green for Danger,* the killer is described as 'Poor Esther' (248). In the first place it is easier to sympathise with her because her crime is related to her grief and guilt over her mother's death. Her crimes are as subtle and technically skilful as Wargrave's: she kills Higgins by exchanging the oxygen used by the anaesthetist with a disguised carbon monoxide canister and hides a key piece of evidence on the corpse of a witness she has ruthlessly murdered. She is conscious of what she is doing whilst she commits her murders and is clearly wracked by her consciousness of right and wrong. In order to be allowed on night duty, Esther incapacitates the normal night nurse by nearly gassing her to death, but is conscientious enough to save her before she is killed (239). When Esther stockpiles morphine from patients' rations at the hospital, she is considerate enough to give them each a reduced

dose so that they are not in terrible pain. All is going well until she realises that she must kill William, a patient with whom she has fallen in love, because he was also a member of the air raid squad who failed to rescue her mother. She is emotionally conflicted about killing him, but still plans to go ahead, a struggle which is dramatically portrayed as she becomes anxious and hysterical about his welfare during an operation, whilst knowing full well that she has switched the canister that endangers his life.

Esther clearly knows the difference between right and wrong, but is suffering from a delusion, what one character calls 'an *idée* fixe' (252), that what she is doing is just. The diagnosis of partial insanity is repeated throughout the novel: when the murderer's identity is still unknown, Cockrill states that he believes the murderer is sane, but obsessed about one detail. Here, the detective is running counter to the modernised view proposed by the MPA, that unsoundness of mind is 'something much more profoundly related to the whole organism - a morbid change in the emotional and instinctive activities' ("Criminal Responsibility" Dec. 1923: 1060). The same view of madness is expressed by one character after the dénouement, when he explains that

> all murderers are a little mad … I think she was sane enough on every other point but just this one. She thought she had to revenge her mother's death and on that subject she was mad. (248)

Although counter to much psychological evidence to the contrary, this attitude was true to the account of madness suggested by M'Naghten and so, if convention is followed through, the partial insanity defence must be ruled out because Esther's motivation is revenge, rather than self-defence. This would result in Esther being held responsible for her crimes and suffering the full penalty.

To the cast, this resolution is unacceptable, a fact that they convey during the dénouement scene. Here, the detective presents his evidence and reveals the identity of the murderer in a typically triumphant tone. What he does not realise is that throughout his victorious monologue, as he recounts the clues and analysis that has led him to the solution, the murderess is dying from a self-administered morphine injection. The rest of the cast, as medical professionals, all recognise the symptoms, but do not supply her

with an antidote. Instead they draw out the detective's monologue, asking him probing questions and pretending not to understand his clever reasoning, to ensure that he is distracted from Esther's demise. When he realises, the detective plummets from a position of absolute authority over truth and judgement to ignorance and powerlessness.

> "All you, doctors and nurses – isn't there anything you can do? …" As they remained unmoving, standing in a silent ring, looking down sadly at the body, he flung himself across her and began clumsily to try to revive her himself. (243)

Although he has succeeded as a detective in ensuring that all the novel's clues, in Žižek's terms, 'retroactively acquire meaning,' (58) his position as a reassuring authority has been shaken by his inability to empathise with the suffering, mentally unsettled Esther or to make an acceptable moral choice about her fate. While Bradley purposefully shocks Coutts to death so that she avoids an unjust punishment in *The Saltmarsh Murders*, Cockrill makes a hapless attempt to revive Esther in order that she face such a trail. In a symbolic clash of the professions, the medical team conspire with Esther, leading a scandalised Cockrill to exclaim: 'You've deliberately connived at her death. You've assisted a murderer in evading justice … You are accessories after the fact. I shall charge you all with it' (244). If Cockrill's anger is not enough to convince us that Esther will receive the full penalty for the murder, another character's response, '[h]ow could we have borne anything else, Inspector?' (243) shows that the cast also assume that her insanity will not be considered as a limit to her responsibility.

It is in cases such as Esther's that applications of M'Naghten would be the most fraught, in which the ability to distinguish right and wrong remains mostly unaffected while an emotional imbalance alters the sufferers' sense of how these values apply to themselves. Although the concept of insanity had ostensibly broadened to include disorders of the sentiments and subjective life following the Atkin Committee, this only in part explains Esther's condition: a more profound psychological understanding of madness and a Freudian account of repression and libido is necessary for a full diagnosis. Although she suffered terribly after the death of her mother, one character

almost scathingly remarks that '[t]housands of other people have had to do the same thing in this filthy war' (249). Esther's madness, and hence irresponsibility, are not only the consequence of her grief at her mother's death, they are consequent upon her entire psychic life leading up to the death: her libidinal attachment to her mother in adult life, her unwillingness to make alternate libidinal investments, her mourning which develops into melancholia. Unless she is viewed according to this psychoanalytic interpretation, her madness does not make narrative sense, and the detective, lacking a sense of justice in conflict with the M'Naghten Rules, would have her suffer the full penalty for her crimes. The characters who sympathise with Esther intuitively are those who offer amateur analysis informed by general Freudian principles: so too do they know enough about the law to know that Esther's madness would not qualify under M'Naghten. In the moral choice by the characters to allow Esther to commit her final crime, suicide, Brand tests the limits of contemporary debates concerning madness, murder and responsibility, and imagines an altered relationship between detective and criminal, in which the detective's mastery is appropriated by the social group, the murderer is humanised, and moral questions asked about the group's responsibility to, and relationship with, both the criminal and the insane killer.

III. Born Criminals

Whether it was possible to be born with innate criminal tendencies was a running theme of psychiatric discourse from the latter years of the nineteenth century onwards. A question of ethical and anthropological significance, it animates psychological debates of the interwar years and inflects golden age depictions of criminality. Raising issues of autonomy and free will which have points of overlap with those raised by the insane killer, the born criminal tests the promise of the clue-puzzle form to offer reassurance and containment. As with killers who suffer mental ill health, so-called born criminals – who in these years were primarily conceived of as individuals with low intelligence and defective moral development – could under interwar laws conceivably claim reduced responsibility and the right to care and treatment. However, attitudes to the criminally-disposed were considerably more conflicted, relating to broader issues raised by the science of criminal positivism and the ethics of group responses to crime.

The educational psychologist Cyril Burt (1883-1971) credits Henry Maudsley with first making the link between immorality and inborn mental states in *Responsibility in Mental Disease* (1872), in particular in the section in which Maudsley argues that 'many, perhaps most, young criminals are morally defective,' (qtd. in Burt 35). Between 1870 and the 1940s, the cross-fertilisation of social studies with evolutionary theory meant that child offenders were often depicted as primitive and degenerate. Early manifestations of vicious behaviour were seen by some as proof positive that children could be born with impaired moral sense, and hence predisposed to commit criminal acts irrespective of the environment in which they were raised. In other accounts, it was hoped that preventive measures, including more individualised education and better health services, could divert troubled youths from turning to crime. The following quotation from Cyril Burt's 1925 study of child delinquency demonstrates that the range of options in punishment or treatment during this period were as varied and distinct as the breadth of opinion on the causes of delinquency itself:

> Is he to be birched, reprimanded or sent back to his parent's care? Can we operate upon his brain, or dose him with some potent drug? Shall we simply mete out to him and to his like, according to some just but mechanical tariff, a penalty proportioned to the measure of each offence … Or, finally, can nothing redeem him from that downward path he has so early taken, so that, indeed, as some have actually contended, it would be best, were it only permissible, to end him at once in a lethal chamber? (4)

In golden age novels which feature born criminals – Gladys Mitchell's *When Last I Died* (1941) and Agatha Christie's *Crooked House* (1949) – the representation of child offenders raises the pitch of the discussion, confronting the detective with an ethical dilemma which tests the boundaries of the form as a reassuring structure directed towards closure, and challenges the figure of the detective as a diagnostician of deviance and instrument of justice. While Christie's novel conforms to beliefs about innate criminality which had, by the time of writing, been rejected by many as both inhumane and scientifically flawed, Mitchell's novel asserts that fatalism is founded upon ignorance and fear rationalised by pseudo-scientific calculations. Featuring the eccentric psychoanalytic detective, Mrs Bradley, *When Last I Died* raises the problem of childhood delinquency in order to explore the environmental and social cause of crime rather than its untested biological foundation. As Knight and Rowland have suggested, female crime writers of the golden age tended to arm their detectives with forms of knowledge and experience constructed as feminine, including empathy and sensitivity to emotional states (Knight, *Crime Fiction* 91; Rowland 19). *When Last I Died* both confirms and supersedes their assertions, as by selecting the stance in the debate which relied upon affective relations with the criminal, feminine knowledge is made to transcend the bounds of gender and form the basis of wider social rehabilitation.

Measuring the Criminal

Informed by Mendelian genetics and a social derivative of Darwinian evolutionary theory, the notion of a born criminal derived from the theories of the most influential

criminal anthropologist of the nineteenth century, Cesare Lombroso. From the 1870s, Lombroso postulated that 'the antisocial tendencies of criminals are the result of their physical and psychic organisation, which differs essentially from that of normal individuals' (Ferrero 5). Prominent jaws and canines, a large skull and asymmetric face as well as drooping eyelids and protruding lips all, in Lombroso's system, characterised the criminal. Projecting criminal impulses onto pre-social man, imagined as part animal, part savage colonial other, Lombroso claimed that psychological features including vanity, impulsiveness and an absence of moral sense combined with such physical features made the criminal 'strongly resemble primitive races' (Ferrero 5). This was as much an organic property of atavistic criminal anatomy as an emotional and psychological one, as Lombroso compared cerebral cell configurations of criminals with those of normal individuals, allegedly to demonstrate that criminality manifested itself in the body even at a microscopic level (Ferrero 22).

Havelock Ellis was an important translator of Lombroso's ideas to a British readership. In his 1890 *The Criminal*, Ellis compiles extensive criminological research from across Europe, juxtaposing physiognomic data, composite photographs (see plates XIV and XV) and sketches of criminal body parts with more wide-ranging studies. These studies are cited as evidence that the unique physical qualities of the criminal would soon be revealed by science, and include enquiries into criminals' agility (108), their insensibility to electric currents (113) and those mental qualities which lead them to alter their appearance (tattooing, for example, is linked with vanity, an almost universal criminal trait, [107]). Although emotional states are mused upon, environmental influences upon behaviour are ignored, while intelligence is not considered as a factor in criminality due to lack of data: noting the combined 'stupidity and cunning' of many criminals, he regrets that although '[s]everal attempts have been made to attain accurate figures as to the relative intelligence of the criminal … there must be a considerable element of guesswork' in any account (133).

The transition from Lombroso's original theories to the genetic 'science' of eugenics in vogue from the early 1910s saw increasing emphasis placed upon the mental

origins of crime. In 1913, in an attempt to discredit the theory of physical criminal type, Charles Goring collected and collated exhaustive statistics on the bodily measurements of criminals.[9] Demonstrating the lack of evidence for physical determinism in criminology, his *The English Convict* proved it was necessary to consider the variables of age, class, environment and physical disability when accounting for the causes of crime (370). Despite exorcising Lombroso's ideas, Goring promoted a new positivist bias, claiming to have found a different criminal type to replace the heavy-browed criminal ament of his rival. He proposed that 'the one vital mental constitutional factor in the etiology of crime was defective mental intelligence' (263). Environmental factors, including poverty, neglect and poor education were, according to his statistics, of minor influence compared to inborn intelligence. To eradicate crime, he concluded, it would be necessary to segregate the unfit and 'to regulate the reproduction of those constitutional qualities – feeble-mindedness, inebriety, epilepsy, deficient social instinct, etc. – which conduce the committing of crime' (373).

In a recent study on fabrications of imbecility in late Victorian and Edwardian England, Mark Jackson relates how between 1890 and 1914 the feeble-minded were constructed as 'a discrete, pathological but manageable menace to society' (3) with class and racial prejudices operative in the division. Key figures in the study, classification and treatment of mental deficiencies in the early twentieth century – Mary Dendy, John Langdon Down and Alfred Tredgold – are discussed by Jackson, who charts how the discourse of feeble-mindedness came to occupy the same threatening position in public debates about social problems as the chronic poor of late Victorian social thought (also see Welshman chapter 3). Isolated as a social residuum responsible for social ills and menacing to civilisation, the mentally defective become the focus of many criminal studies after Goring, whose work validated the belief that feeble-mindedness was not only debilitating to the 'progress' of the race, but a decisive feature in the hereditary transmission of criminal traits.

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9 See Goring's frontispiece contrasting imaginative criminal portraits with photographic (iv), or any one of his 286 Tables based on measurements and other data collected from 3,000 English convicts.

The construction of the feeble-minded as such accounts for why eugenics was considered a 'modern, scientific enterprise' (Stone 115) during the Edwardian and interwar years. The benefits of segregation and sterilisation of the feeble-minded are discussed and, with differing degrees of intensity, promoted, in both the crime novels under discussion here. Fears about contamination and racial degeneration persisted, and during these years the tracing of family pedigrees came to be seen as a powerful tool to combat the propagation of feeble-mindedness: the Eugenics Society even produced schedules to enable the public to put together their own family history with ease, encouraging them to note defects, deaths in infancy and diseases (*How to prepare a family pedigree*). The purpose of these exercises was to attempt to engineer the race rather than to eradicate crime *per se,* although the fact that criminologists took to these ideas demonstrates that criminality was seen widely as an inherited trait.

Amongst the criminal psychologists who challenged depictions of the feeble-minded in determinist accounts of crime were W.C. Sullivan, Cyril Burt and Lilian Le Mesurier. They noted that Goring's conclusions, while diverging from Lombroso in content, shared its positivist weaknesses, as mental deficiencies replaced the shape of the nose or forehead as the locus of criminal stigmata. Sullivan criticised Goring for this reason, stating that 'common to both theories is the assumption that phenomena of social conduct can be directly referred to conditions of organic constitution' (9). What was missing was a provision to account for the influence of environment upon personality and the augmentation of intelligence through education, resulting in unsophisticated portrayals of inbuilt tendencies which would find expression irrespective of circumstances. In spite of these criticisms, Goring played an influential role in the development of new discourses of mental and intellectual measurement which would dominate the study of the criminal, and wider educational and social discourse, for the next twenty years.

During the century's first decade, increasingly specific tests had been developed and used to probe the criminal mind. The foremost of these tests, which would become mainstream from the mid-1910s, was a standard intelligence test. The Binet-Simon test –

developed between 1908 and 1911 in France and updated by Lewis Terman as the Stanford-Binet Test in 1912 and 1916 – used a series of questions of increasing difficulty to match the level of an individual's intelligence according to an age scale of normal development. The aged three years test, for example, asked subjects to point to parts of the body, to name familiar objects and to count. Progressing to the more sophisticated twelve year olds' test, the subject was asked to provide definitions of abstract words such as pity, revenge, justice and charity, to repeat five digit sequences in reverse order and to interpret the meaning of images. For anyone over the age of sixteen, to be graded below an average fifteen year old in intelligence test was to be considered an 'inferior adult,' while a score above the 'aged seventeen years' test meant one could class oneself a 'superior adult' (55).

The link between crime and mental deficiency which these tests were reputed to demonstrate when applied to the prison population was supported even by practitioners critical of determinist accounts. The peer review journal *Studies in Mental Inefficiency,* launched in 1920, features many articles supporting this connection including the following excerpt whose author, while making clear that such criminals should be considered as not fully responsible for their crimes precisely because of their unenviable inheritance, asserts that they should be considered as products of the prolific stocks of 'improvident and feeble-minded' individuals, and therefore indeed born to criminality (Potts 21-22). W.C. Sullivan, in spite of his criticisms of Goring, takes a similar line, stating

> that mental defect involves some degree of predisposition to crime has been inferred from the universally recognized fact that the proportion of weak-minded persons is considerably higher amongst convicted criminals than it is in the general population. (184)

Obviously, he does not consider the possibility that more intelligent criminals were less likely to get caught.

The grounds for the debate over whether or not these persuasive statistics really did prove a link between mental deficiency and crime were only partially established

when the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 was passed. While not directly referring to the Binet-Simon age scale, the Act attempted a technical definition of possible levels of mental defect, and ordered that a court trying a person found to be mentally defective could 'postpone passing a sentence or making an order for committal to an industrial school' and instead obtain 'an order that he be sent to an institution or placed under guardianship' (Leach 19) rather than face a criminal sentence. Within the Act, mental deficiency was split into four levels, the first three of which were, in descending severity, idiot, imbecile and feeble-minded persons (Leach 5-6). As the link between mental defect and criminality was already inferred, the common prerequisite in each case that the condition be exhibited from birth seemed only to add legal weight to the notion of the born criminal. The wording of the Act then, in particular the description of feeble-mindedness with its weakness of judgement and impaired self-control, contributes to the construction of individuals of low intelligence as a persistent threat.

Moral Deficiency

While the application of intelligence tests to convicts demonstrated that the prison population contained many individuals of subnormal intelligence, many so-called mental defectives could be proved to have never exhibited any criminal tendencies whatsoever: some were even found to be extraordinarily honourable. *Studies in Mental Inefficiency* recounts acts of bravery and selflessness by boys from special schools – for example, in two articles boys are commended for saving younger children from drowning ("London Special School Boys' Gallantry" and "A Special School Boy's Brave Act") – leading the author of the latter article to state that 'we dwell so much on the sins and failings of defectives that we are apt to forget that here and there amongst them … qualities may be found which we ourselves do not invariably possess' (18). Likewise, Sullivan observes that 'a low level of intellectual capacity may be associated with a high degree of moral sensibility' (183). While feeble-mindedness could not be considered as purely criminal, another inborn tendency was found to account for the wild lapses in morality which were perceived in some criminals.

The 1913 Mental Deficiency Act defined the final of the four categories of mental deficiency as follows:

> Moral imbeciles; that is to say, persons who from an early age display some permanent mental defect coupled with strong vicious or criminal propensities on which punishment has had little or no deterrent effect. (Leach 7)[10]

This concept of moral deficiency found influential supporters in Charles Mercier and the physician and writer, Alfred F. Tredgold. To Mercier, moral disorder was 'an incurable kink' in the mind, which made the sufferer 'insensible to the obligations of morality' (*Crime and Insanity* 35). A critic of Freud, Tredgold framed human conduct and misconduct as a consequence of instincts in the Darwinian sense. While demonstrating an acute sensitivity to moral relativism in noting that 'moral standards vary with different races and at different evolutionary phases of the same race' (323) he reasoned that the psychological basis for moral deficiency must be a reversion to a primitive state prior to the development of moral instinct. Just as the body had evolved, so the mind had developed in response to social living, and when civilised it would respond near instinctively to group prohibitions against the satisfaction of sexual or violent desires. Instincts could be partially satisfied, for example sexual desire was gratified in marriage rather than rape, while the right to own property was a civilised compromise of the instinct to acquire through threat or theft. What changed in the human mind was conduct itself, so that behaviour 'gradually become more and more deliberate and less impulsive' (324). To Tredgold, moral sense comprised of these developed inhibitions and was innate rather than acquired, meaning that the normal individual was born with the tendency to develop moral sentiments and to take pleasure from social and altruistic acts. In the case of the moral deficient, the primitive instincts remained dominant, while inhibitory factors failed to develop. Exactly as Lombroso had interpreted criminals as atavistic throwbacks, so Tredgold saw moral defectives, or 'criminal aments'[11] as

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10 In the Mental Deficiency Act 1927, the term was replaced with 'Moral Defectives', in order to avoid confusion with the more common use of the term 'imbecile' to refer to someone of low intelligence (Tredgold 338).

11 A generic term which refers to any feebleminded criminal, but which often carried the connotation of inborn or organic criminality.

'certain individuals in whom the mental faculties concerned in restraining instinctive behaviour would appear to be not disordered, or even retarded, but actually absent' (335).

Another condition easily mistaken for moral defectiveness was, according to Tredgold, the mere absence of moral sentiment. He reasoned that individuals who lacked morality would suffer no moral qualms committing crimes if the rewards were high enough and the chance of detection small. If they confirmed to moral codes, it was without any altruistic motivation but simply in order to avoid legal punishment, and it was this sense of self-preservation, or wisdom, as Tredgold termed it, which distinguished them from the morally deficient (337). It was for this reason that the 1913 Act defined a moral defective as someone on whom 'punishment has had little or no deterrent effect' (Leach 7). They were not consciously wicked, or lacking in intelligence in the same ways as the other categories specified in the Act:

> The psychological concept of moral deficiency, therefore, is that of an individual who differs from the ordinary type of defectives in that he is neither illiterate, deficient in his range of general knowledge, nor lacking in ordinary understanding; but is defective in adaptiveness or wisdom in the moral sense, and at the same time possessed of strongly marked anti-social impulses (Tredgold 340).

Their treatment would be managed in institutions run by local authorities under governmental supervision. As they were by definition incurable, they would not be sent to regular prisons, and responsibility for any crimes they committed would be judged by different standards than that of a normally developed, morally culpable individual. They would need to be put into care for life, and no attempt to reform or rehabilitate them would make a difference.

How could such a condition be quantified? Neither the Binet-Simon test nor Lombroso's measurements could rate character traits such as ingratitude, selfishness and the inability to feel shame. The study of heredity, as promoted by eugenicists, was no help either, as Tredgold noted that moral defectives were generally freak occurrences,

'the only abnormal member of a family characterized by sanity, good mental development, and moral behaviour' of average and above intelligence and possessing no unusual physical features whatsoever (343). Proof of persistent acts of cruelty or viciousness such as the torture of animals, destruction of property, violence, rudeness and theft performed since earliest childhood were equally difficult to collect, as Tredgold's detractors would claim.

A review at Tredgold's case studies only complicates the matter, as his confirmed moral defectives could, according to other contemporary understandings of delinquency, be diagnosed as insane, emotionally unstable, inclined towards crime due to poor opportunities or inadequate education. For example, a young woman called F.E.L. is firmly certified as a moral imbecile (359-62). A bright but argumentative teenager, she left school aged fourteen to take up domestic service, but ran away from that post and a succession of others, committing thefts along the way and often ending up in the company of older men and soldiers. In a letter to her family which Tredgold quotes in its entirety, she expresses her wish to act and to be a 'Lady', two desires she is only likely to achieve in London: 'I knew I was never meant to lead such a poor life; I wanted to look higher and be a lady, and now I shall be one' (360) she asserts. Freud might have called her an hysteric, Hélène Cixous hailed her as hero, while her rejection of her social role and futile attempt to actively shape her own life might be compared to that of Shakespeare's sister as imagined by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (42-4). However, the desire of Tredgold as writer, and the prison doctor as disciplinary authority, to shape her case to fit a recognised pathological category is abundantly obvious: 'the only section in which she could possibly be included was that of a moral imbecile' (361) Tredgold claims. Noting that she is too intelligent to be classed as an imbecile, and is not diagnosable as insane, her obstinacy is taken as a sign of inborn immorality, her repeated desire to run away as a lack of wisdom: 'she had persisted in this course when it was manifestly to her disadvantage' (Tredgold 361). F.E.L. is at no point credited as an individual with a right to make choices about her life, neither are her complaints about domestic service and her expressions of desire for autonomy

appreciated as reasonable or serious utterances. Although the opportunity to recognise F.E.L. as an intelligent individual stifled by the material conditions of her life arises, Tredgold finds it most appropriate that she is instead certified as a moral imbecile and confined to an institution for mental defectives for life (361).

Tredgold was able to define moral defectives with confidence, undoubtedly in sympathy with his class and gender prejudices, but other criminologists found the category impossibly vague. William Healy, a child psychologist who carried out extensive studies of inmate intelligence, asserts:

> When we began our work there was no point on which we expected more positive data than on moral imbecility. But our findings have turned out to be negative. We have been constantly on the look-out for a moral imbecile … We have not found one … they have always turned out to be somehow mentally defective or aberrational; or to be victims of environmental conditions or mental conflict, and not at all devoid of moral feeling. (783)

While Healy found the category of moral defectiveness less true to life than more sophisticated accounts of the complex interplay between environmental influences, intellectual capacity, and psychological constitution, other writers offered radical reconsiderations of the meaning of mental deficiency and its potential treatment. For example Terman contended that, although between 18% and 50% of the young criminals he tested were feeble-minded in some respect (8-9), this did not prove a link between low intelligence and innate criminality. This was because the mental age at which most criminals were stuck, around year twelve (classed as borderline cases), was the age at which the understanding of abstract concepts, including right and wrong, normally developed:

> The formation and use of abstract ideas, of one kind or another, represent, par excellence, the "higher thought processes." It is not without significance that delinquents who test near the border-line of mental deficiency show such inferior ability in arriving at correct generalizations regarding matters of social and moral relationships. We cannot expect a mind of defective

> generalizing ability to form very definite or correct notions about justice, law, fairness, ownership, rights, etc.; and if the ideas themselves are not fairly clear, the rules of conduct based upon them cannot make a very powerful appeal. (Terman 285)

Moral sense is not absent; rather, moral ideas are functions of more mature thought processes which borderline cases find it harder to acquire. This means that borderline cases are less able to scrutinise and judge their actions according to tentatively perceived social mores.

It could be argued that there is something innately criminal in Terman's account of mental deficiency, but such a conclusion is contrary to his intentions in developing intelligence tests. While Tredgold's definition of the moral imbecile, and his somewhat haphazard diagnoses, located a depraved, amoral segment in the criminal mind, Terman's account at least allows for the possibility of more suitable care and training to help such children function socially. Terman's emphasis is upon the interplay of individual understanding with social activity and socially acquired meaning, both of which the borderline child is involuntarily limited from grasping. Education therefore has a specific responsibility in helping the borderline child to understand the world, so that they can be integrated into, rather than isolated from, society.

Education and Environment

The influence of Terman's thoughts on education can be seen in the work of pioneering prison reformer Lilian Le Mesurier. In 1922, she was sent to the Boy's Prison in Wandsworth, London, to interview boys on remand and make reports on their psychological state. Later she enlisted more female helpers and volunteers to make visits to prison and to the homes of boys in order to provide 'the fullest possible history of the lad,' in order to determine 'why character and environment have been maladjusted, and

by what process can readjustment come' (Paterson xi).[12] By 1939, specific legislation had been passed thanks to the 'steady growth of interest and informed opinion,' amongst the general public regarding the care of young offenders, (Le Mesurier xxi), leading to the establishment of nine Borstal institutions in the UK to cater for around 4,000 new young offenders each year (Paterson xiv). The number of women visitors also grew to meet the demand to assess each child individually.

The fact that the new corps of visitors were women was of central significance to the project, as a sympathetic approach is frequently portrayed by Le Mesurier as a uniquely feminine trait, in contrast to the empirical and scientific interest male doctors may have had in the young criminals. It is perhaps Le Mesurier's willingness to see herself in this light that encouraged her to question the scientific validity of much terminology then in circulation regarding offenders, as well as criminal classifications, tests, and statistics-making then in vogue. Even when such research was undertaken with the intention of developing teaching and treatment methods appropriate to each condition, Le Mesurier contends that the consequent partitioning of child offenders into ever smaller categories, including the morally deficient, in effect made people believe that rehabilitation was hopeless:

> the tendency in the public mind to-day [is] to assume that most juvenile delinquency and adolescent crime are due to a mental defect. People often talk of the offender as having a kink, a screw loose, and so on, and shrug their shoulders in a pitying way. (50)

She preferred to consider the boys under her scrutiny as having taken a 'wrong turning' which could be righted with proper care (ibid.).

She knew, however, that her view was not shared by the general public who, having only recently become aware of the results of studies of intelligence and deficiency in criminals, 'are now perhaps inclined to swing over to an opposite extreme. In a natural reaction from previous ignorance and indifference, they are apt to form an

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12 This work was first published in 1931 to describe the establishment in 1922 of a large corps of Women Visitors to advise on the appropriate Borstal institution for young offenders. It was re-printed in 1939 with new introductions and prefaces.

exaggerated picture of the number of delinquents who are suffering from mental defect' (39). Ironically perhaps, it was the well-meaning intentions of educators and psychologists which she credits as having created this public misconception about mental deficiency and other psychological conditions equivalent to moral imbecility in young offenders. However, the frightening statistics which were often cited alongside unsavoury character descriptions do not fit with Le Mesurier's descriptions of young offenders. Although 15% of groups of remand boys she tested were shown to be inefficient, feeble-minded, with low mental age or, in fewer cases, insane, she emphasises that '85 *per cent of these delinquent boys were found to be normal both in body and mind*' (Le Mesurier's italics, 49).

Rather than pursue what she framed as the hopeless view of delinquents as deficient, Le Mesurier interpreted crime as the outcome of a conflict of individual characteristics not in themselves antisocial, with a social setting antipathetic to their successful development. She hypothesised about the boy of high-spirits who, if born rich, might have set out to climb Mount Everest, but being poor, would terrorise the police and commit daring acts of delinquency (35). Le Mesurier refused to interpret the offences of the poor boy as anything more sinister than the expression of character traits which could be used to better advantage given different opportunities. All of this was consistent with her fundamental tenets, that crime concerns people who are in conflict with an environment that is failing them, and that children should not simply be given up as uneducable because of any deficiencies they might genuinely have.

In this view Le Mesurier was not alone: a consequence of the 1913 Act was the establishment of both clinics for juvenile delinquents and Special Schools for non-criminal children which pioneered an individual approach. Tests were developed which could locate the learning disability afflicting a child, be it visual, phonic or psychological, and techniques were used to help the child learn in a targeted and personalised way. Lucy Fildes, who was involved in this work, defended the new methods as worthwhile both because of their benefits to the welfare of the child and for the good of society in general. She contended that excluding children from education

because they could not learn in the standard way in effect excluded them from society, leading to both low intelligence scores later and potentially to crime, as children turned their energies to 'often less legitimate employments' (11). As well as constituting preventative measures against delinquency, the benefit to children who had committed petty crimes was the hope that they could be reconsidered in light of their newly articulated, better defined learning disabilities, providing a more manageable framework for education and rehabilitation than the unspecific, pessimistic category of 'feeble-minded'.

In sympathy with the rehabilitative projects with which Le Mesurier was involved, preventative institutions aimed to alter the development of troublesome youths before they found themselves in serious trouble. The benefit of training in skills such as weaving and carpentry was promoted in governmental pamphlets and guides such as *Child Training Through Occupation* authored by Lucy Bone and Marie E. Lane in 1923. The Stoke Lyle Institution was opened in 1920 to give seemingly uneducable boys the opportunity to learn skills such as music and gardening. Described in *Studies in Mental Inefficiency* as a private house with a 'good garden,' a report boasts that pupils took to music enthusiastically, and that one misbehaving boy previously sent to a Workhouse by his despairing parents was 'now quiet and obedient' ("News and Notes" 13-4). In this and other similar reports, the institutions do not claim to have made the boys quiescent with force and threat, but to have used methods sensitive to individual psychologies to normalise their behaviour, having abandoned the notion of an inevitable descent into crime and concentrated instead on each pupil's strengths. Whether abuses of power took place within such institutions is an issue for a different study; certainly, differing perceptions of the realities of rehabilitative institutions for young offenders are considered in Gladys Mitchell's *When Last I Died*.

Psychological Rehabilitation

While few commentators were willing to credit crime as entirely the product of environmental influences, the connection between individual psychological constitution

and familial and social environment defined the approach of more progressive practitioners, foremost of which was educational psychologist Cyril Burt. Burt approached the young offender as an individual psychological case to be analysed in their entirety. Information concerning the health, physical condition, habits, interests, emotions, and temperament of the offender should be collected and considered in the context of class, family circumstance and environment. Intelligence is still a major consideration to Burt, being part of the child's personality, but the child's reason for committing crimes cannot be inferred from it alone. Rather, a complete understanding of the conditions in which the child was placed in relation to his/her character is essential: 'the two together yield a synoptic view of the situation at the moment, with all its inner and outer components' (Burt 8).

Burt's involvement in the British Eugenics Society, as well as the compelling claims against him for falsifying data on the inheritability of intelligence (see Joynson; Mackintosh passim), have to be matched against his more positive work in helping to establish the London Child Guidance Clinic in Islington in 1927 (Hearnshaw 44). While he held morally troublesome views on the reproductive rights of mental defectives, when a child was diagnosed as such he favoured guidance over incarceration and individual study over typecasting. Each crime, Burt asserted, could be understood as the consequence of a unique sequence of events, of 'all the antecedent influences that have been making, moulding, perhaps marring the young offender, day by day and year after, from the first instant when he was still a single cell within his mother's womb,' (Burt 9). The 1913 Mental Deficiency Act's specification that the moral deficient must have exhibited their vicious tendencies from an early age is made meaningless when the individual is viewed as the product of countless influences since inception. Displaying similar tendencies to Hamblin Smith, the onus of responsibility is taken from the individual offender and distributed upon society, genetics, mentality and the family, with the result that blame is almost entirely dispersed, and Burt's attention turns to the more socially useful task of rehabilitating the child criminal.

Healthy, Normal, Vicious

In attempts to determine a positive science of criminality and to define the individual offender as a recognisable subject, what was often neglected was the consideration that it was perfectly normal for children to act viciously. Competing explanations were offered to account for outbursts of violent emotions, but as Le Mesurier contended, 'mere childish naughtiness, youth's natural reaction of revolt against authority' (6) could perhaps account for much of what was considered criminal behaviour. Tredgold was not alone in treating the movement from childhood to maturity as a microcosm of human evolution, with childhood corresponding to the primitive stage of humanity, complete with violent instincts and insufficient reason (335). Even Havelock Ellis, writing in the mould of Lombroso, allows for such a possibility when he quotes one teacher's reflections on his childhood experience:

> I know that between the ages of eleven and fifteen I was totally devoid of affection, passionately revengeful, and capable of acts that I should recoil from now with horror ... and – from observations I have since made as a teacher, I am inclined to suppose that most boys of that age are. Amongst other little fantasies, I broke a cat's leg with a cricket-bat, and afterwards battered its head in; and, when an apprentice in a draper's shop, I turned on all the gas in the warehouse with the idea of blowing up the establishment, by way of revenge for an unfair fine. (384)

The teacher's misdemeanours are no less shocking (or are even more so) than those recounted and diagnosed by Tredgold as cases of moral defectiveness. Ellis goes on to assert: 'Most children have some criminal impulses, and most people can recall from their own childhood acts which, however trivial, were still criminal in nature' (384). Ellis concludes that 'there can be no doubt that such a germinal tendency to "moral insanity" and criminality exists in children' (384). The possibility that it was normal to have vicious impulses was, however, not adequately theorised in any of the works listed. While Freud's of theories of ambivalence, the death drive, the fantasy life of neurotics and the compelling nature of taboo locate the enigma of criminality in unconscious

mental life and its conflict with social laws, Freud is not a central figure in this account. Christie's and Mitchell's approaches to child delinquency are chiefly influenced by debates concerning inborn moral deficiency and domesticated rehabilitation influenced by Le Mesurier, respectively.

Agatha Christie, *Crooked House* (1949)

Although few commentators publically condoned the execution of incurable offenders, the possible extreme that such a position could reach lurks in many accounts. In Agatha Christie's *Crooked House* (1946) the murderer is a child, Josephine Leonides, who poisons her grandfather and her nurse, intentionally incriminates other members of her family and plans to attack her parents if she doesn't get her way. That the random, terrifying and prolonged assault upon inhabitants of the Leonides' rambling mansion is a delightful game to Josephine is revealed in her diary, in which she gleefully boasts about her ingenuous crimes and plans future strategies against the adults who refuse her childish demands. When her aunt discovers the diary, rather than allow her young niece to suffer punishment, she writes a note falsely confessing to the murders herself and takes Josephine on a car journey, intentionally crashing the car and killing them both. She justifies her actions out of love for Josephine, because she did not want her young niece to be punished or put into an asylum. The rest of the family are in agreement, and express their love for Josephine in spite of her crimes, because they believe her immorality is the consequence of an inborn deficiency rather than wickedness: 'You do not like anyone less because they have tuberculosis or some other fatal disease. ... She had been born with a kink' (191).

The assertion that delinquent children are born with a kink was specifically criticised by Le Mesurier, both because it is based upon the belief that criminality is predetermined and organic, and because it implies that the prospect of recovery, reform, or future happiness for young offenders is futile. This is indeed the stance that *Crooked House* takes in presenting Josephine as not only a child with a kink, but a veritable moral imbecile, the most devious and fantastical category of criminal aments isolated by

Tredgold as a social threat. She is described as extraordinarily intelligent for her age, and lacking in morality: 'with her precocious mental development had gone a retarded moral sense' (189). As Le Mesurier predicted, when a child is believed to have a kink, it is decided that 'there is nothing to be done about it than to put them away' (50). Eugenicists and educationists debated the benefits and shortcoming of segregation and sterilisation of young criminals, while others suggested drugging and experimentation.[13] In the quotation below, the family reflect upon Josephine's death:

> "If – she had lived – what would have happened?"
>
> "I suppose she would have been sent to a reformatory or a special school. Later she would have been released – or possibly certified, I don't know."
>
> Sophia shuddered.
>
> "It's better the way it is." (191)

Josephine's assisted suicide – or it may be called murder – is condoned by her family, and in numerous ways it is a problematic solution. Although the detective does not have to take responsibility for punishing the killer, the novel's rejection of the legal and governmental care system – to which death is preferable – is both entire and, worryingly, not interrogated at the novel's close.

Crooked House is both bleak and socially conservative in regards to its representation of the child criminal. It is also highly troubling in its assessment of the hereditary nature of criminality, as the racial and class prejudices which were often operative in assignments of born criminality are emphasised in discussions of Josephine's origins. Her grandfather Aristide is Greek, from a working class family, and became extremely wealthy through questionable business practices. Josephine, the youngest of five of Aristide's descendants, is described as his heir proper, having inherited his looks – they are both described as ugly and small – as well as his cunning and his lack of moral inhibitions. In his lifetime, her grandfather reined in his supposedly natural criminal tendencies, instead channelling them into canny, often fraudulent and dishonest commercial practice. Josephine, who has inherited both his

[13] See the ripostes to a sequence of letters in the Morning Post on the theme of 'The Purity of the Race' in "A Question of Sterilisation."

mental capacities and moral indifference, is limited within the domestic spheres of femininity and nursery-bound childhood, and so we see her hatching devious plans and performing malevolent acts within this circumscribed universe, with none of the opportunities for material gain, enterprise or power through trade which motivated her grandfather. However, while it may be interesting to suggest that Josephine, like many of the juvenile delinquents whose lives were recorded by interwar criminologists, turned to crime because of a poverty of more worthwhile goals to pursue, this is not the emphasis of the novel. Rather, heredity and its overpowering legacy moulds Josephine's character and makes her fate appear inevitable.

In its confirmation of inheritance, its hopeless stance towards the child killer, and its indifference to social influence, *Crooked House* is a socially conservative narrative. It overlaps uncomfortably with interwar positive criminology, eugenics and, in the post-Second World War context, with Nazi medical killings in the name of 'racial hygiene'. The fact that the insane, the mentally deficient, and those suffering from brain damage were condemned by Nazi doctors versed in the language of genetics and degeneration (Lifton 47), could hardly be ignored in the post-war years. However, the representation of the charitable, almost heroic, euthanasia of the criminal ament Josephine reveals the appeal of this residual ideology in spite of, and in absence of any serious examination of, its role in the catastrophic events in Europe of which Christie and her readership should have been all too aware.

Gladys Mitchell, *When Last I Died* (1941)

Mitchell's novel also features child offenders, but unlike the wealthy Josephine, Mitchell's boys are generally poor, abused, and neglected, and are never treated as latent master criminals nor as ingenious moral imbeciles. Mitchell's choice to depict institutionalised child offenders therefore marks a shift from the genre's more conventional consideration of complex crimes perpetrated in singularity by motivated and well-concealed murderers. Child delinquents constitute, in narrative terms, a mundane manifestation of criminal activity, but it is for just this reason that they feature

so centrally in the novel. By analysing offenders treated commonly as a social and biological other, and in the crime genre as quite different from the plotting criminal paradigmatic of the golden age crime novel, Mitchell provides a place from which to critique the reduction of supposedly undesirable individuals to type, denying them their right to singularity and the dignity of psychological reconstruction reserved for the killer/protagonist. In doing so, she demonstrates her sympathy with writers such as Le Mesurier and Burt who used affective understanding of the criminal as a practise of rehabilitation.

A description of the novel's complex storyline cannot make immediately apparent how central to the plot is the question: why do people, especially children, commit crimes? It is necessary, however, to outline its main details. Having been called in to a boys' reformatory school to help in the search for two escaped inmates, Bradley sets about trying to solve an unresolved mystery: the disappearance of two escaped boys – Piggy and Alec – six years previously. Her only evidence is a discarded diary supposedly composed by Bella Foxley, the Institution's cook at the time of the escape. Reading the diary, Bradley notices a connection between the boys' disappearance and a mysterious sequence of crimes in Bella's own life. The details reconstructed from the diary and the recollections of a Foxley family servant run as follows: after the suspicious death of her elderly Aunt Flora, who died choking on a meal which Bella may have prepared, Bella inherited some money and was therefore able to leave her detested job at the Institution. Initially, she went to stay with her cousin Tom and his wife Muriel, who earned an unconventional income recording ghostly phenomenon in supposedly haunted houses and writing up reports for occult periodicals. At the time Bella went to stay with them, the couple were residing in a house with unusually high poltergeist activity. This was an impressive draw for paying séance visitors, but also a danger: when Tom fell from a second floor window, injuring himself, the spirits were blamed. A few days later, when Tom fell once again, this time to his death, his hysterical wife Muriel accused Bella of murdering him. Although arrested for murder, Bella was acquitted at trial (in no small part due to the spite of Muriel's testimony against her, which to the jury seemed

biased). Bella then retired to live with her depressive sister Tessa in small village, but within the year Bella's body was found floating in a pond, the assumption being that she had committed suicide, perhaps because of the guilt she felt for the murders of Tom and Aunt Flora.

The story, as it is so established, involves Bella, Muriel and Tom, while the deaths to be investigated are those of Aunt Flora, Tom and finally Bella. The initial impetus for uncovering this mystery – the disappearance of Piggy and Alec from the Institution – is treated for much of the novel as a mere bridging device to the Foxley mystery. The mystery of the boys is abruptly put aside as individuals who fit the more traditional golden age focus – middle class adults in a social group divided by sexual tensions and acquisitive financial imperatives – take centre stage. This narrative suppression of Piggy's and Alec's fate does not last, however, as the detective's focus shifts back to the boys towards the novel's close. Indeed, their disappearance is not mere subplot, but is an unacknowledged key to all the other mysteries considered in the novel. Under Bradley's scrutiny, the supernatural occurrences in the haunted house are firmly attributed to human agency, as she proves the very physical spirit manifestations were caused by the escaped boys themselves. Bella assisted in their escape and then colluded with Muriel and Tom to hide them in the house, a part-refuge, part-job situation which to the boys came to feel more and more like imprisonment. Installed in the house's many secret passageways and cavities, the boys became increasingly frustrated with their situation, leading them to push Tom from the window at the first opportunity. At this point, they were locked up by Bella and Muriel in the house's cellar, so that when Tom fell from the window for the second time, they could not have been responsible. Imprisoned, abused, starved and eventually suffocated in the muddy ground of the ancient cellar, their murders are the unarticulated crimes which connect and make sense of all the novels' other mysteries. Having discovered their bodies, Bradley is able to prove that, while Bella helped Muriel imprison the boys and knew that they had no food, it was Muriel who actually smothered them. Muriel is also responsible for the murder of Aunt Flora – which she committed to incriminate Bella and make her vulnerable to

blackmail – and Tom, whom she killed out of jealousy, hoping that Bella would be suspected of the killing (the police knowing nothing of the boys). Muriel emerges as a ruthless and unstable character, and Bella herself is discovered still alive and living under the assumed identity of her dead sister, Tessa. The assumption that Bella murdered Tessa is proved untrue: Tessa indeed committed suicide and Bella assumed Tessa's identity in order to escape the persecutions of Muriel. At the novels' close, Muriel is tempted back into the haunted house and is worked into a state of terror by the ghostly phenomena simulated by Bradley, causing her to confess to her attempts to send Bella to prison for the murder of the boys, as well as role in Tom's and Aunt Flora's deaths.

Bradley's Approach

Bradley is brought in to look for the escaped boys because it is thought that, as a psychologist, she will be able to ascertain from the other boys where they might be hiding.[14] Thus, from the opening, she is placed in a sympathetic role and trusted to interpret the private mental states of young offenders which baffle their official guardians. She is also posed at odds with the contemporary government, who

> with one of those grandmotherly inspirations which are the dread and bane of progressive educationalists, had decreed, some ten years previously, that its theories with regard to the preventive detention of delinquent children were a long way out of date, and were to be re-stated in accordance with the facts so far gleaned by child-guidance clinics. (8)

Policy is influenced by current psychological research, but in ways that fail to acknowledge the diversity of contemporary discourse, or to tackle the deep-rooted problems with the system. Superficially adopting progressive practices without subscribing to the ideology which underlies them, the Institution is represented as spasmodically implementing reformist policies whilst permitting prejudices inherited from previous thought-systems to shape the treatment of the boys, thereby contributing to abuses. The changes the Institution has made are merely cynically adopted,

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14 The method she uses is word association (Mitchell 13).

confirming the doubts of the progressives and failing the inmates, as the narrator sardonically notes:

> in spite of humane treatment, fewer punishments, better food and the provision of playing fields, bad boys, on the whole, continued to be bad, and even attempted, more frequently than could be justified, to escape from Elysium – in other words, the Institution – into the wicked and troubled world. (9)

The incorrigible behaviour of the bad boys recalls the 1913 Act's definition of the moral defective, on whom punishment has had little or no deterrent effect, but the novel's intention is to counter such a view. As the renaming of the Institution as Elysium suggests, what is being questioned are the merits of institutionalisation itself. If the world outside is persistently depicted as troubled and wicked, and life within the Institution desirable, is it therefore surprising that juvenile delinquents found themselves unable to integrate into society on their release, and frequently re-offended? Bradley's interchange with the Warden suggests as much:

> " … they're here for a punishment, you know."
>
> "I am afraid so, yes. A terribly immoral state of affairs."
>
> "And for guidance as well; and for the protection of society."
>
> "I know. If I were a caged tiger, do you know the people who would have to be protected against me if ever I made my escape?"
>
> "Yes, yes, all very well. I admit these boys have a grievance against society. But what can we do?" (15)

It is the fact of imprisonment, however comfortable the surroundings, that makes the boys want to escape, according to Bradley. The institutional context is seen, not as a solution, but as another environment likely to have a negative effect on the boys' behaviour and outlook. To remedy the problem, Bradley offers to take small groups of boys away from the Institution on a seaside holiday under her instruction (15). This experiment, which the Warden treats as eccentric and dangerous, is as much an attempt to provide a more attractive location as to give the boys individual guidance and

attention. Also, as security in her seaside cottage would be minimal, they would be trusted with an unprecedented degree of autonomy. Escape would always be possible, but Bradley's experiment is predicated upon the boys being encouraged to stay and improve their behaviour themselves rather than through discipline and the threat of punishment. Her suggestion that the inspirational model of athletes might help the boys give up their addiction to tobacco follows the same logic. She is so insistently opposed to punishment that she would rather cigarettes were offered as a prize for good behaviour than the boys be reprimanded for smoking them (12). Making changes of behaviour seem sensible and desirable to the boys is at the heart of this approach. As crime may be seen as self-defence against difficult circumstances, so the boys will only alter their behaviour if they know they will not suffer as a result. The example of the cigarettes also necessitates that those set up to judge the boys exercise empathy, a trait curiously lacking in many accounts of the treatment of child offenders. When the Warden claims that it would be unfair to ask the staff to quit smoking, Bradley notes her interest 'in a system which regarded the powers of self-denial of the staff as being inferior to those of the boys' (12). This view is consistent with an approach which does not view young offenders as a category apart from the norm and judge them as persistently wicked, but rather as flawed as any other individual.

Bradley's experiment combines an approach which prioritises the influence of environment over inborn tendencies. It also contributes to the novel's positive portrayal of domestic care. Imagined as a utopian place of security and nourishing emotional attachments, the contrast between the Institution and Bradley's cottage contributes to the novel's emphasis upon environmental influences upon individual behaviour, and the need for rehabilitation sensitive to children's needs. The cottage provides security and responsibility, as well as autonomy, with the sense of attachment and belonging the boys feel ensuring they make no attempts to escape, in spite of the lack of safeguards. Treated as individuals rather than case-studies in an agglomerated prison population, they are also regarded as children, meaning that they cease to act in the ways prescribed to them as criminals and delinquents. They are also treated fairly and spared the petty injustices

of the Institution, meaning that in turn, they treat their carers with mutual respect. The environment is seen to provide a space and a role for the individual, which moulds their character and defines their behaviour, making the transformation of subjectivity entirely possible.

The theme of nourishment is imperative, and is central to the novels' emphasis upon environmental influence over inborn nature in the pursuit of the origins of crime. When Bradley first visits the Institution, she witnesses the boys hastily consuming starchy, unwholesome foods. Dietary nourishment stands for nurture, and after eating this unsatisfactory meal, the boys retain a 'wolfish aspect' (7). Their aggressive demeanour is contrasted with that of Bradley's impeccably behaved nephew Derek (16), who, rather than being an inherently good boy, is better nourished both physically and emotionally. Bella, the Institution's cook, is also a representative of bad care. She is accused of presenting Aunt Flora with the fatal meal of the indigestible grated carrot, and in her role in the Institution is suspected by the boys of making dumplings with screwed-up pellets of paper – just one of the ever more disgusting objects the boys (somewhat unjustly) claim to have found in their dinner, until they are forced to stop making complaints through threats of violence (34-5). Bella's role in the escape of the two boys and their eventual starvation makes poor nourishment and the absence of domestic care central to the boys' fates. Burt advised criminologists to attend

> to all the antecedent influences that have been making, moulding, perhaps marring the young offender, day by day and year after, from the first instant when he was still a single cell within his mother's womb (9)

and it is exactly in the spirit that Mitchell portrays nourishment. Constituting another environmental factor detrimental to their development, it is held to be responsible for their bad behaviour.

In contrast, the results of Bradley's country cottage experiment emphasise that a change of environment, individualised treatment and good nourishment can affect the change in behaviour which determinists such as Tredgold believed to be impossible.

Towards the novel's close, the elderly housekeeper Eliza, who has been taking care of groups of boys on holiday from the institution, relates:

> Tried their hand at jam-making, I declare, they did, with me to tell 'em what to do. Made a fair hand at it, too, and pleased as Punch with it, time they got it into pots. Laugh! I thought I should have died to see boys so solemn-like over picking the fruit and then picking it over, and stirring the pans and all that. (142)

Following a catalogue of negative opinions and representations of the boys' inherent wickedness, the positive results of Bradley's domestic cure are charming, even intentionally comical. This is light-heartedness, however, and not satire; the therapeutic exercise of making jam is presented as a realistically positive image of useful instruction and integration into a supportive environment which it is inferred has previously been lacking in their upbringing. In a wider sense, a simple but useful task completed under minimal supervision has the capacity to momentarily reform the boys, recalling the approach of the Stoke Lyle institution, as well as Le Mesurier's insistence that frequently crime is caused by misdirected energies: making jam gives the boys the sense of pride and satisfaction for being good at something, a feeling they may have not had before, or may have had only after committing a crime successfully. Despite the Warden's early horror at the idea of the boys being under-supervised, the only crime they commit while on the holiday is stealing a farmer's chicken (142). In Tredgold's account of moral defectiveness, acts of meaningless cruelty including the torture of animals is noted as common. The boys, instead, cook and eat the chicken: an act of at least constructive mischief.

Contemporary educationalists expressed comparable views, both in the establishment of institutions such as Stoke Lyle and in writing. In "Individual Studies" (1920), for example, Fildes expresses the importance of flexible, individualised learning and urges schools to 'try to adapt the methods of teaching to the needs of the child' (10) as a means of averting delinquency. The impoverishment of early education was, in Fildes' view, responsible for alienating children from society and stunting their

development. Children who could not learn in a regular way were often dismissed from classes and classified as feeble-minded, when alternative teaching methods could have induced them to keep up with their peers or develop other skills. Bradley's affinity for more progressive educational approaches resembling Fildes' is suggested in her earliest interactions with the boys: 'She thought they needed stimulating, and applied psychological treatment, to their astonishment and her own amusement. She discovered very soon that they were afraid of her' (Mitchell 13). It is quite typical of Mitchell's humour to describe Bradley as terrifying. Still, it is astonishing that an elderly, badly-dressed and eccentric woman could instil fear in the Institution's dangerous characters – who, as local legends have it, have almost kicked an instructor to death (27), bit an instructor's hand so severely that it turned septic (29), and collectively, having escaped, have 'robbed hen-roosts, half-murdered an old woman and held up a village post-office' (26). The boys' new-found reverence appears to support Fildes' position, as an alternative approach astonishes the boys themselves and enables Bradley to communicate with them where others have alienated them further. This theme is further developed in an interchange between the Warden and two misbehaving boys named Dinnie and Canvey. Using interruptions and asides, Bradley mocks and criticises the Warden for pretending not to understand the boys' excuses for their misbehaviour in order to make them look like fools (10), and for making personal enquiries about their health in public, without considering that this might 'prove embarrassing and even disagreeable' to them (11). In an attempt to shore up his own power within the Institution, the Warden is contributing to the boys' sense of exclusion and bitterness; he fuses all his interactions with them with a 'combination of bullying and weakness' (10) rather than providing intellectual stimulation and camaraderie, which, as Bradley demonstrates, can achieve what meaningless, brute discipline cannot.

There is, however, an instance in which Bradley's feelings are less clear. This is when she contends that:

> delinquent children, who, like delinquent adults, can be divided into those brands which can be snatched from the burning and those which,

> unfortunately, cannot, should (literally) be killed or cured. This former treatment was to be painless, the latter drastic. (8)

Even when Mitchell's frequently flippant and highly ironic paraphrasing of Bradley's speech and actions are taken into account, Bradley's words seem extraordinary. At worst, her statement brings her into alignment with the views of eugenicists, at best, it ostensibly supports the pessimistic conclusions of Tredgold and others concerning the incarceration of moral imbeciles.

Thankfully, no child characters are determined by Bradley to be incurable, neither does she judge any other characters fit to be killed, except of course the murderer, in the sense that Muriel's conviction is as good as a death sentence. That being cured is offered alongside killing as a final solution for delinquency could, perhaps, be seen in a positive light based on this fact alone, and in accordance with an optimistic attitude to rehabilitation. Who is beyond a drastic cure enacted by the ever-competent Mrs Bradley? Similarly, her description of killing as painless and curing as drastic is also suggestive. Is the simplicity of the first method what makes it attractive to certain practitioners, as opposed to the time-consuming, expensive and methodically contested process of rehabilitation? The other alternatives to this drastic solution so far discussed give a truer sense of Bradley's and the text's attitudes to the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Analysing the Boys

By juxtaposing contrasting explanations of the causes of delinquency with accounts of the boys which humanise or dehumanise them, the text invites critiques of the validity and worth of different accounts of crime. Commentary upon the appearances of two boys – Dinnie and Canvay – reference positivist criminology's reduction of individuals to types which determined their behaviour through attention to their physical appearance:

> [Dinnie's] brows slanted in an alarmingly Mephistophelean manner, and he had a wide mouth set in a grim jaw. The Americans, with their flair for

> good-humoured expressiveness, would have dubbed him a tough citizen. (8)

The validity of this response to the criminal is then undermined through contradictory commentary upon another boy's internal emotional states and psychological processes:

> Canvey was a rat-faced boy with handsome, wide-open eyes, affording a strange impression of cunning and frankness mingled. Call the cunning lack of self-confidence, and the frankness an attempt, probably an unconscious one, to compensate for this, and you had a different portrait of the boy, and not necessarily a less faithful one. (11)

The former excerpt is a standard, if colloquial, application of Lombroso, relying on a subjective impression, popular ideas of criminal types, attention to the line of the jaw, and a humorous Gothic touch. The second description also contains assumptions about character based upon physical features, but here Bradley reads against first impressions to reinterpret the signs otherwise superficially deciphered in the boy's face and expression. The scientific bias of so-called criminal anthropology is parodied and its subjective and irrational component exposed, in a manner shared by Le Mesurier, who provides an excellent critique of how people fused their 'natural instinctive feelings, with a vague inaccurate knowledge of the doctrines of Lombroso and his school' when making such judgements (Le Mesurier 28). Bradley's rejection of a subjective interpretation of physical features enables her more accurately to interpret Canvey's cunning for diffidence and his frankness as a defence mechanism. Although this does not necessarily make him a better boy, it certainly calls for different treatment than the threat of violence and thundering voice employed by the Warden against these supposedly wicked born criminals. Bradley's use of psychology, then, does not claim that physical signs cannot give insight to character, but suggests that interpreters should be cautious in deciphering them, as they may read them incorrectly, or forget that these signs can be used as a mask, unconsciously or otherwise, to disguise other, more significant, personal traits.

Psychiatric practices, far from being promoted as an infallible science, are shown to be open to exploitation, misunderstanding and conscious or unconscious bias. The ambivalence of psychiatric language as it is employed to describe young offenders is, in the same spirit, held up to scrutiny. In this excerpt, Bradley is amused by the forthrightness of one distrustful boy: 'One even went so far as to ask whether she was there to pick out the "mentals". "We are all 'mentals,' my poor child," she remarked' (13). In the sense the boy uses it, the term 'mentals' refers both to the mentally deficient and to abnormal mental states, perhaps full paralysis or insanity. In her response, Bradley refers to both this corrupted, pejorative sense, and to the more neutral meaning of individual psychological organisation, or mental processes. She can, of course, state that we are all mentals in the latter sense. However, it is precisely because she is a Freudian that she sees the former, pathological meaning of the word at work in one and all. To Mitchell's psychoanalytic detective, every individual is a potential object of study – people do not become mental cases only when they are mentally ill. Tansley, who has been quoted previously, states that 'the mental factors which produce the characteristic behaviour of the neurotic and the lunatic are at work in the 'normal' mind and give rise to many well-known traits of "normal" behaviour' (Tansley 6). Likewise to Mitchell, neurotic conditions are seen as the consequence of failed repression and misdirected libidinal energies, and inherited mental 'kinks' play less of a role than events in psychic development, meaning that pathologies of mental health could be experienced by anyone to different degrees of intensity.

Perhaps Bradley is proposing that psychoanalysis could better explicate the boys' conditions than the variety of means available to test them for moral and mental deficiencies. As no children are analysed in *When Last I Died* (unlike in Mitchell's *The Saltmarsh Murders* or *St Peter's Finger*) it is impossible to say for certain. The use of jam making as a therapy may imply that nothing so drastic as analysis is necessary in their cases, that they are mentally sound and responding in a natural way to the environment of the Institution. What is clear is that Bradley refutes the division of individuals into the categories of normal and mental. This approach, while sympathetic

to Le Mesurier's concern about the morbid assumptions that young offenders are all feeble-minded or pathological, is clearly at odds with the imperative for criminal categorisation during the 1920s to the early 1940s. The boy's question to Bradley, seen in light of the exhaustive statistics collected from young offenders institutions after Goring, is more poignant than audacious. It vicariously expresses the anxiety felt by subjects of such studies concerning their isolation as an undesirable mental type and the appropriation and institutionalising of their identity by means of specialist knowledge.

Beyond Hope

Not all of the characters who pass judgement upon the boys are as humane or astute in their evaluations as Bradley. As well as documenting events, Bella's journal includes many reflections upon the boys, which equivocate between condemnation of and identification with them. At one point, the journal states:

> What hideous little faces they all have. It is nonsense to say … that criminals are made and not born. These boys were predestined to crime, and no psychologist or educationalist is going to persuade me otherwise ... Most of them are going to be in prison a year after we let them out of here. (25)

This excerpt conforms in all respects to a determinist view of criminal predispositions, but its placement is a red herring. The journal is a false document, and was not been written by Bella at all. Tom authored the journal under Bella's name and filled it with false details and suspicious entries. This was in order to incriminate Bella in the death of Aunt Flora – which Tom and Muriel planned together (207) – should anyone find the diary during the enquiry. The negative views expressed about the boys by the narrator of the journal are attempts to portray Bella as capable of extreme cruelty and bitter owing to her unhappy years at the Institution, therefore capable of killing Aunt Flora for her legacy. As well as expressing loathing for the boys, 'Bella' also writes:

> They are nice boys and I hope they will not be caught. Piggy's little sister was a horrid child, he says … Alec is a merry little boy … There is no harm in this boy. Thieves can be as honest as anybody else along their own lines,

> and it is all nonsense for William to think that boys like these can be reformed, or that the world would be a better place if they were. (27-8)

Tom is attempting to construct her as a criminal, so a sympathy with criminal motivations supports the later, oblique, suggestion, that it would be right to kill Aunt Flora in order to inherit her money and have a comfortable life after years of hardship. The claims that Piggy's infant sister, whom he pushed out of a window, was horrid, and that the world would be no better without criminals, are means to justify criminal acts in the context of an unjust and unsavoury world, which Tom is leading the reader to believe that 'Bella' feels it is. Once again, the question of reformation is raised, and the only consistency with this excerpt and the previous, spiteful, account is that in both the boys are judged to be beyond cure, a view emphasised in the following gruesome excerpt:

> Denny has a poison bottle in which he places butterflies … And what a good thing it would be if this institution were one gigantic bottle into which we could drop the boys, one by one. ... A little struggling and choking, a fluttering of helpless limbs, and then – a perfect specimen of young criminal ready to be preserved, dissected, lectured upon and buried, according to his uses as an anatomical, biological or psychological specimen. (25)

While the exhibition of criminal anatomy, head casts and the use of mug shots in criminological writings were commonplace in nineteenth century and turn of the century writing, this would have both an anachronistic and a controversial statement to make in the early 1940s. Such views of criminal predisposition were still within living memory (they were a point of resistance for educationalists) and as this excerpt demonstrates, a charged and residual element of contemporary culture (R. Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 122). Written in a private journal, the implication is that, although such values and judgements have been outlawed in public, they are deeply felt in private and stolidly resistant to more progressive voices. Of course, the diary is disingenuous, Bella has not written it at all, but still the text resists the easy dismissal of these views as tactical character assassination. Young offenders are treated as specimens with a lesser right to life and care, and negative and dehumanising views on them infuse the novel. 'Bella's'

fantasy is even played out at the novel's close, when the discovery of the semi-preserved remains of Piggy and Alec in the mud of the house's basement gruesomely echoes the image of the killing jar established early on. In his pastiche of a reactionary view, Tom as writer of 'Bella' has come close to articulating the true contempt for young offenders privately felt by many of the novel's characters. When she is confronted with the text, Bella denies being so explicit in her journal: 'I never put any of my real opinions in that diary,' she states, but admits, 'I generally used to say what I thought, to one person and another' (190). Bella is shocked not so much by the opinions that Tom has attributed to her, but by their forthright expression in text. Tom's words are not so much a fabrication but potentially a proclamation of Bella's tacit prejudice.

It is her prejudice against the boys that enables Muriel and Tom to manipulate her. Bella connives in the couple's plans, helping the boys escape and establishing them in the haunted house, something she would never have done had they been 'normal' children. Bella is also easily convinced that it was the boys who pushed Tom to his death from the window. She believes them capable of anything, being 'dangerous and criminally minded,' (204) and because 'one of the little devils had committed murder already' (191).

At this stage in the novel, Bella has been on trial twice for murders she did not commit. She might therefore recognise that in drawing such conclusions, she is denying the boys the right to a fair and unprejudiced trial, a right which has so far kept her from being convicted. As the text makes explicit, during Bella's trial for the murder of Piggy and Alec, former suspicions against her for the murder of Tom and Aunt Flora, as well as her criminal act in assuming Tessa's identity, are not mentioned in case they prejudice the jury. Indeed, in the lengthy section from the trial, events from the past are censored and Bella's previous activities expunged from the court narrative, utterly altering the appearance of her actions (174). Without reference to the narrative in its entirety, the prosecution cannot prove why Bella might have wanted to kill the boys, or even make sense of her role in the crime, and so she is acquitted. While Bella (who is indeed guiltless of the boys' murders) is protected by the tenets of a law that ensures crimes are

judged according to facts rather than prejudices, the boys' guilt is assumed merely on the basis of their character and past misdemeanours.

When Bradley confronts Bella with details of Piggy's and Alec's deaths, Bella is surprised, but responds: 'they're better out of the world, two kids like that. What chance did they ever stand? Who'd give them a chance? Poor little wretches! Thieves and murderers before they'd hardly begun their lives at all' (190). The combination of indifference and pity shows the effect of determinist accounts of young offenders, which, as Le Mesurier stated, allow people to 'shrug their shoulders in a pitying way' and assume 'there is nothing to be done about it than to put them away' (50). Worse even, it permits systemic maltreatment and violence, as assumptions about their incorrigible criminality lead Bella to assume that their right to life is of a lesser value than other, normal, individuals. This pessimistic prophecy is, however, proved false in the character of Larry. A former inmate of the Institution and friend of Piggy and Alex, he is called up in court as a witness against Bella. In the intervening years since Piggy and Alec's escape, he has left the Institution and found a career in the Royal Navy. But, in spite of the new direction he has taken, and in spite of the 'unshakeable' evidence he gives in court, his former criminal associations prejudice the jury against him: 'It was enough that he had been an inmate' (174). This judgement seems especially perverse as Larry is one of the novel's most morally sound and selfless characters. On being hunted down by Bradley to give evidence, he is somewhat embarrassed to be reminded of his youthful crimes, but this is 'almost equalled by his desire to assist in tracking down the murderer' (164). Although Larry knows that he will not be believed in court, and that public acknowledgement of his youthful crimes may prejudice his present role, he quickly agrees to assist, simply because: 'They was good little chaps' (164). As an embodiment of the potential for reform, he counters the view of Bella and others who perceived the boys as beyond hope. He also provides the first believable account of their attitudes and motivations, responding to Bradley's enquiry about whether they intended to return to crime after escaping: 'I couldn't say what ideas they got. Racing stables, more like, from what they said. I reckon they was the kind to go straight all right, give

'em a chance, as long as it wasn't too dull' (165). The idea that such boys would be better out of the world, when compared with Larry's experienced optimism, is revealed as both ignorant and open to abuse.

This danger is represented through the partial narrative suppression of the boys' deaths. The disappearance of Piggy and Alec is framed at the outset as a corollary of the novel's primary narrative, which concerns the deaths of Aunt Flora, Tom and Bella/Tessa. Bradley's function as detective is to redress this narrative injustice and prove the boys' presence in a mystery that is unsolved as long as they are considered absent. Their narrative neglect functions as a metaphor for abuse and is tacitly abusive: while the horrors of the haunted house evoke the fear of the unknown that detective fiction is founded upon, the discovery of the boys' bodies in the house's waterlogged cellar substitutes the gothic thrill of spirits with a genuine horror at human cruelty. Generic expectations are inverted as the truth is revealed as more horrific than the illusion, while the plot moves in a different direction to the standard golden age novel – faced with a mystery, it moves towards the discovery of bodies and a crime which would otherwise have been suppressed. The choice to depict poor and neglected young offenders in a genre typically concerned with more fantastical displays of individualistic and bourgeois criminality is unusual, and yet Bradley's quest as detective is as much concerned with solving the Foxley mystery as with proving that the boys' deaths are significant as deaths. In a novel that presents a conflict between fantastical fears and a more prosaic, yet humane, sense of reality, this balancing of narrative emphasis contributes to a move to re-humanise those individuals subject to dehumanising pseudo-scientific calculations, categorisation and reactionary sensationalism.

IV. 'The Concealed Enemy of the Self':

Deviance and Dissociation

Social insecurity, personal unease and anxiety about the identity of others have become key concerns in critical discussions of crime writing. The fears that haunt golden age crime writing concerning the self, 'the solitary, perceiving, and interpreting locus of anything that can be called experience' (Robinson 7), have been often remarked upon, but have yet to receive close critical focus. At the same time as modernist writers were engaged in dismantling the unitary, developmental self of Romantic literature, and fragmenting the heroic individualism of pre-War Imperialist British adventure stories, crime writers were offering representations of selfhood every bit as unpredictable and disobedient.

The ways in which crime fiction encouraged, probed and assuaged fears concerning selfhood for its readership are of considerable significance for studies in the form: they are especially pertinent to this study because crime writers engaged with contemporary psychology in order to explore the threat of personal deviance. Psychological conditions of insane automatism, dissociative fugue and post-epileptic seizure were used as powerful metaphors for self-dissociation, comparable with the neurotic characters who conveyed modernist subjectivity. Suspending the 'solitary, perceiving, and interpreting locus' (Robinson 7) and undermining the autonomy of the judging, thinking 'I', crime fiction's unseating of the self-knowing Cartesian self at the core of stable identity altered the characteristics of, and the nature of the relationship between, the criminal and the detective.

While it is certainly true that the rise of psychoanalytic theories can be detected in writers' association of the conscious self with the ego and of the deviant, concealed self with the unconscious, it is also true to say that these ideas were not absorbed into plots unproblematically. What, their novels ask, was the unconscious actually like? What drives and forces does the conscious self or ego master and contain, and what extremes of behaviour can be expected when unconsciousness is unleashed in insanity,

automatism or fugue? A contemporary fascination with epilepsy helped to complicate the question, as Freudian and physiological theorists battled to account for the meaning of the seizure, with the issue of responsibility and 'knowing the nature of one's acts' ever relevant. These questions, which were drawn from, and fuelled by, popular discourses of insanity and press coverage of automatic killings, represent an accessible but critical form of engagement with problems of selfhood which were simultaneously preoccupying modernist writers.

Deviant Selves and the Reader

Stephen Knight's discussion of psychological deviance in the crime novel suggests a theoretical point of departure for this chapter. In *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction,* Knight asserts that crime fictions have been intrinsically concerned with controlling and consoling the anxieties of their readership in their particular historical moment of emergence. So too have diverse crime narratives worked to shore up ideologies at the moment at which they have become uncertain. A distrust of divine intervention in the criminal justice system is proposed by Knight as context for the insistence upon Godly endorsement of crime solving in the eighteenth century *Newgate Calendar,* while concerns about the limitations of rational and scientific enquiry in the late nineteenth century are seen as foundational to the enormous popularity of Conan Doyle's forensic reasoner Sherlock Holmes. Discussing the original structural device of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), in which the first person narrator is revealed to be the murderer, Knight asserts that Christie enacts the fear 'the respectable bourgeois held that disorder within society, threats against the self might be caused from within the charmed circle, and by someone who seemed most trustworthy' (*Form and Ideology* 112). More unsettlingly, Knight suggests that the narrator's use of 'I' and the nearness of the reader to the narrator-killer calls upon fears about the concealed content of the mind. In *Roger Ackroyd,* the reader innocently inhabits the consciousness of the killer for the best part of the novel. This commitment, according to Knight, awakens 'an awareness of possible deviance within the reader's self' (ibid.).

A likely source of this culturally specific fear can be located in contemporary psychoanalytic thought. As Neil Badmington has suggested, 'to read Freud is to witness the waning of humanism' because Freud's thesis of unconscious impulses undermined the Cartesian model, in which 'the critical determinant of being is rational, fully conscious thought' (1). In *Roger Ackroyd*, the narrator's voice overcomes the conscious defences of the reader, insinuating itself as a reliable, transparent voice and manipulating the reader's perceptions of what takes place within the text. As Knight asserts, the reader experiences a sense of danger and personal threat at the novels' dénouement, for which reason contemporary critics felt Christie had gone 'outrageously far' (*Form and Ideology,* 112) in her plotting. 'This level of anxiety' he states, 'lurking beneath the more overt fear of a concealed enemy of the self, is touched sharply' (ibid. 113).

As the title of this chapter indicates, Knight's term 'the concealed enemy of the self' is one that will be returned to throughout the ensuing discussion. In its original context, Knight uses it to refer to the unconscious, and proposes a dichotomy between the archetypal detective and the criminal shaped by the Freudian model of the mind. The criminal is seen to correspond to the deviant unconscious and the detective to the socialised, inhibiting super-ego. The detective's task as 'super-ego' is the suppression of the hostile machinations of the criminal/id, a task which is eventually accomplished in *Roger Ackroyd,* but only after the reader's dangerous identification with the narrator has taken place. Hercule Poirot triumphs as a competent detective of both the criminal and the deviant self, but the dénouement – related by the murderer in the form of a letter – suggests that the deviant part of the mind has triumphed as a final narrator of the self.

Roger Ackroyd forms an interesting parallel with Christie's *The ABC Murders*, a text which will receive closer attention below, because the wresting of authority from the detective in *Roger Ackroyd's* act of self-narration is something the latter work resists. At stake in *The ABC Murders* is the issue of whether the detective alone is able to uncover the secrets of the self, or whether a psychologist, through analysis, or the individual her/himself, through introspection, has more authoritative insight into the mysteries of

the mind. This dilemma of authority is at the centre of these texts' treatments of personal deviance.

'The Concealed Enemy'?

Freud describes the unconscious as 'an aboriginal population in the mind' composed of 'inherited mental formations' ("The Unconscious" 195). Merging ideas of civilisation as the teleological evolution of humanity with fears of degeneracy, the unconscious is treated by Freud as both the originative site of primitive instincts, including sex and self-preservation, and the place to which their expressions as desires and fantasies are sent if they are rejected by consciousness as too deviant, too socially prohibited. Accordingly, Knight's reading relies upon a negative view of the unconscious, constituted by ambivalence, repressed desires and wayward libidinal attachments. The concealed enemy of the self, always yearning for representation, is a fearful thing, and its contents when they break out are unfamiliar and disturbing, even murderous. It is because of the shared conviction that the concealed self is deviant that the act of the detective in diagnosing, containing and punishing the criminal is supposed to provide reassurance.

As well as in the symbolic sense detailed above, crime novels articulate these fears in more corporeal forms, problematising, even challenging, the notion of the deviant unconscious itself. As an idea, the deviant self is certainly persistent in many texts, but so too do alternative models of the self and ideas about the content of the mind emerge. Cases of mental illness and cognitive disorientation help articulate challenges to the notion of a core, stable identity and a reliable, self-narrating 'I'; however, the loss of consciousness or a stable sense of self does not necessarily release primitive, unconscious violence. Even in those novels in which deviant natures are revealed, the distinction between detective and criminal becomes less clear. This is especially the case in Christianna Brand's *Heads You Lose*, in which an insane automaton performs the role of *both* detective and criminal, rocking between these roles in his state of mental unrest. The division of functions within the singular mind suggests a new way of thinking about literary externalisations of the super-ego and id in the pairing of detective and criminal.

Criminal motivation, no longer necessarily seen as a purely self-interested expression of 'evil', is seen instead as a very mysterious thing, so mysterious that it was not necessarily known even to the criminal.

Literary Selves : Self-Division

The divided and concealed selves which feature in golden age crime writing can be situated within a rich literary, theological and intellectual tradition. The division between the 'I' and the 'not I' has been a central concern of Western philosophy, while the distinction between the spiritual and the material, the celestial and the pathological, has animated medical and philosophical debates between proponents of dualism and materialism, theologians and scientists. In folklore and myth, the figure of the double has been used as a means of articulating these concerns. The *doppelgängers* of German Märchen probe fears of a loss of authenticity and the dangerous power of the double to incriminate. Inspired by these tales, the figure of a concealed enemy within and of the self took on robust form in nineteenth century Gothic and Dark Romantic writing. Texts like James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), in which a fatal tale of duelling brotherhood overlaps with a quasi-Faustian encounter between the desperate Robert and the diabolical Gil-Martin, look back to older Christian archetypes of good and evil: but as Dennis Brown suggests in *Modernist Self*, in many nineteenth-century double tales, 'good and evil have become psychologised' (4). To Brown, the double prefigures modernist notions of selfhood in proposing limitations to the unified, rational subject, but does not quite match them: '[t]he dramatic division of self … or the projection of a contrary self as double, were only familiar variants on the model of unitary selfhood – and in a paradoxical way confirmed the normal validity of that model' (4-15). In an alternative reading, Dimitris Vardoulakis has asserted that the literary doppelgänger presents 'a notion of the subject/subjectivity that is defective, disjunct, split, threatening, spectral' (101). Nineteenth century *doppelgänger* narratives posed the question of whether the double represents external temptations, which test the unified self, or reveal the ultimately flimsy nature of selfhood itself. In doing so, they

prefigure twenty first century neuroscientific accounts of consciousness which, in contrast to philosophical accounts which privilege the experiential giveness of selfhood, employ evolutionary science to account for the self as projection and trickery (see Feinberg).

Psychoanalysis is well-tuned to address the self-deceiving and artificial devices of subjectivity, and much of Freud's writing concerns literature which probed the self and tested its claims to unity and self-knowledge. In his essay on the uncanny, Freud asserts that fantastic occurrences in literature, of which the double is one, are frightening and intriguing not because of their absolute novelty, but because of their oblique representation of the desires, secrets and undesirable insights of the unconscious. The uncanny is not frightening because it is something utterly unfamiliar, but because it is 'something which is secretly familiar, which has undergone repression and then returned from it' ("The Uncanny" 249). On one level, the notion of divided selfhood can be seen as a repressed thought itself, hence the figure of the double represents the return of the individual's awareness of their subjective discontinuities. Alternatively, the desires that the double enacts originate in the unconscious, are repressed, but continue to attract cathetic energy in the unconscious. The uncanny effect comes not in the absolute new, alien quality of the double, but in its familiarity.

While many *doppelgänger* narratives clearly function as moral allegories, so too can they be seen to respond to the experience of mental illness, be it in the dissociation of identity, the splitting of personality, or insane delusion. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) can be read as a prototypical narrative of divided consciousness, while Hogg's *Confessions* can be seen to portray the psychological and physical domination of the conscious self by a powerful delusion. In the years following the First World War, literary and medical-legal treatments of insane automatism reflected an interest in the disabling effects of mental illnesses, as aspects of the self appeared autonomous and alien to sufferers. The antisyzgy of these earlier literary figures remained a fertile means of understanding selfhood as moral conflict and an interplay between free will and determinism, sanity and madness.

Golden age crime writers were also writing in the context of experimental modernism, which offered radically new models of minds and means of communicating the deviance of selfhood. According to Light, modernism, with its 'obsession with unstable identities, the ultimate unknowability of others,' and concomitant existential crises shares an anxiety over the falsity of social masks which can be seen in the crime novel (88). The modernist preoccupation with digging deeper to uncover psychological conflicts and irrational inconsistencies unapproachable within the confines of nineteenth century writing, produced studies of characters who are mysteries to both the reader and themselves. Stream of consciousness writing, perfected by Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, foregrounds the surprise, disgust, delight, and confusion of characters at their own unconscious effusions. In *The Weatherhouse* (1930), Nan Shepherd plumbed the depths of characters who are shaped piecemeal through their peers' contradictory and shifting perceptions, and in a fearless and uncomfortably intimate passage, forces the supposedly superficial Miss Louie Morgan to recount the complex, painful, self-deluding, and previously unvoiced motivations which lay behind a petty theft. Shepherd exposes the inconsistencies and moral indeterminacy of motivation, while André Gide's arch and iconoclastic *Lafcadio's Adventures* (1914) features a motiveless crime, whose perpetrator is unable to account for whether an unconscious impulse, or the rational testing of a philosophical doctrine, urged him to commit the deed: 'What's the use of wanting me to explain to you what I can't explain to myself?' (270) he exclaims. As in other of his works, Gide's fascination with the gratuitous act – carried out disinterestedly, without the individual having taken its positive or negative consequences into consideration – reveals that irrational and indeterminable feelings of pleasure motivate individual acts. In their fantasies and their gratuitous acts, his characters bear little relation to the image of themselves which face the world, (see Gide 250) making the premise of conscious dictates and reasonable motivations seem merely superficial. In *L'Etranger* (1942; published in English as *The Stranger* in 1946), Albert Camus returned to the problem of the senseless and unmotivated killing, demonstrating how the meaning of such acts was of persistent

fascination in early twentieth century intellectual culture. British crime fiction, although it pays little heed to the questions of faith and nihilism which motivated French writers, shares a preoccupation with the paradoxes of free will and the blithe, even absurdist approach to death that in 'high' literary texts may confront the reader as shocking, although in crime fiction, seems merely a matter of course. Of course, the motivations which are lacking in Gide and Camus are by necessity found in crime fiction. What the modernist context contributed were explorations of motivation which incorporated the premise of the unconscious, of the irrational, and of mysterious and concealed pleasure which old dualities were unable to articulate.

War Neurosis and Literary Fragmentation

Prior to the Great War, modernist writing introduced a new idiom for approaching the self. Representations of the multiplicity of the self, its changes over time and the impressionist quality of individual experience informed the aesthetic register of the pre-War novels of Dorothy Richardson, Henry James and Marcel Proust. While these advances were echoed in post-War writings, what also developed was the exacerbated fragmentariness of the forms of writing used to communicate the experience of selfhood. Abandoning the integral and self-possessed selves of earlier literary canons – the transcendent self of the Romantics and the reliable, essentially knowable social types of nineteenth century realism – post-War modernists continued the trend begun before the First World War, and in their writing expressed interest in drama, social masks, role-playing, and in textual disintegrations of unitary selfhood.

Mental breakdown, as it is understood now, was a new phenomenon at the coming of the First World War, as unprecedented mental collapse afflicted thousands of soldiers on the front line. Symptoms resembling modern war neurosis have be traced back to antiquity – Anthony Babington cites evidence of conversion hysteria in chronicles of the Greek-Persian Wars (7) – while the ailment christened 'nostalgia' in 1678 was medically employed to account for the despair, homesickness, apathy, paranoia, fever and even paralysis experienced by soldiers well into the nineteenth

century (Babington 7-9). Despite the United States Government having issued a major report which detailed the high occurrence of 'nostalgia' in the American Civil War – 3.3 cases in every 1000 men (ibid. 15) – as recently as 1888, nonetheless, at the onset of the Great War, there was no ready account for why healthy young men in their thousands should experience mental collapse. Madness was understood as a consequence of nervous disease, hereditary organic weakness or, in more of a literary turn, a collapse of reason brought about by intense emotion: 'the mere insurgence of delirium from the fever of hate, or from jealousy, or love, or evil in the blood' as Fiona Macleod (William Sharp) wrote in 1894 (126). According to Richard Holmes in *Firing Line*, 'the process of recognising that there was such a thing as a psychiatric breakdown was a painful one' (43).

In *Modernist Self*, Dennis Brown states that 'it was the 1914-18 War which precipitated many less hypersensitive individuals into the existential reality of self-fragmentation' (43). The experience of blasts, injury, the daily spectacle of dismembered and pulverised bodies, and the loss of individual dignity and particularity in the vast machine of modern warfare were matched by real psychological breakdowns, as soldiers 'fell apart' and had their sanity 'shattered' on a grand scale. Siegfried Sassoon, the officer and poet nicknamed 'Mad Jack' for his daring exploits in combat, wrote during his stay in Craiglockhart Military Hospital in 1917: 'No doubt they'll soon get well; the shock and strain / Have caused their stammering, disconnected talk' (lines 1-2, "Survivors"). Physically incapacitated, tormented by horrific dreams and memories of death which overwhelm them by their immediacy, Sassoon's 'broken and mad' (l.10) fellow patients were at the front line of the crushing mental and physical bombardment which would feed into literary representations of both the sane and the troubled mind. Neurosis, 'an experience which combatant writers helped establish as quite central to modernist representations of selfhood' according to Denis Brown (10), became a key metaphor for the diverse social and psychological repercussions of the War, attesting to its centrality to the modern experience.

As much can be seen in Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs Dalloway*, in which the shell-shocked soldier, Septimus Warren Smith, experiences discontinuous and spontaneous rushes of thought and feeling, merged with agonising memories and flashes of terrible fear and paranoia. Clearly, neurotic experience necessitated, and in turn validated, experimental literary techniques of stream of consciousness, shifts in time and depth of focus, the merging of literary registers, multiple voices, scraps and collage. At the same time, the juxtaposition of Clarissa Dalloway's discontinuous and floating experience of selfhood negates any concrete distinction between the sane and neurotic mind. Woolf's challenge to the autonomous and unitary self is one posed by the modern subject irrespective of their personal experiences of war. In this challenge, neurosis, both as real illness and as a framework for understanding lived experience as fragmenting, decentred, dispersed and heterogeneous, becomes a potent metaphor for modernist selfhood.

Psychologies of Dissociation and Deviance

The theoretical, aesthetic and canonical dislocation between the popular fictions of crime writers and the rarefied modernist, experimental novel, is not as wide as it may seem. Many critics, including Alison Light, Jon Thompson and Slavoj Žižek have been struck by similarities in techniques of narrative disruption, devices of unstable identity, and a tone of critical playfulness in both high and low forms of post-War writing. War neurosis receives considerable attention in crime writing –Sayers' detective Peter Wimsey is a famous sufferer – however, a comparable psychological condition which became emblematic of new forms of subjectivity in the post-War context was dissociation. Encompassing nineteenth-century notions of the duality of selfhood, dissociation incorporated the experiences of modern warfare, as well as modern psychological insights into the nature of the unconscious, in order to account with clinical exactitude for the potential deviancy of the self. The conditions portrayed in Agatha Christie's *The ABC Murders* (1936), Margery Allingham's *Police at the Funeral* (1931), and Christianna Brand's *Heads You Lose* (1941) occupy the following pages.

How credible are these narratives of dissociation? How do automata behave? Why does the unconscious want to commit crimes, and what is the relationship between the 'I' and the 'not I' when dissociation occurs? Contemporary public discourses concerning dissociative insanities and their relation to crime emphasised how potent and widespread were fears of deviant selfhood. Crime writers responded by creating detecting figures capable of diagnosing deviance and isolating the true self submerged in the confusion, at the same time as they posed challenges to the hyperbole of representations of unconscious aberration.

Trauma and Automatism

In the years following the end of the First World War, cases of insane automatism brought about by the trauma of conflict began to be reported. Often in tandem with war neurosis, in which psychic trauma is relived and physically re-enacted by the body that shakes, suffers from phantom wounds, and sees and hears what is no longer there, in automatism, repressed memories were enacted in violence towards others. While shell-shock made heroic masculinity seem both hollow and dangerous, the difficulties of returning to civilian life and making self-determined choices after the industrialised, dehumanising slaughter of the prolonged conflict helps to account for the appearance of automata figures in the immediate wake of the First World War. Towards the end of the 1930s, the horrors of mass training and mobilisation were being fully realised in the fascist states of Continental Europe; it was during these years and into the early 1940s that the novels dealing with automata discussed within this chapter were penned.

In the Chadwick Lecture of 1917, F. W. Mott – one of the earliest British doctors to publish research on shell shock – presented his views on amnesia. Many of his patients at the 4th London General Hospital had been found after an explosion in a 'dazed condition … not unlike a fugue or automatic wanderings of an epileptic' (Mott 40). According to Mott, their memories were not lost, but were rather 'screened off' and were 'not able to pass the threshold of consciousness' (ibid.) Memories did, however, resurface in dreams or 'terrifying visual hallucinations' (ibid.). In other cases, sleeping

soldiers went ‘through the pantomime of fighting with the bomb, with the bayonet, with the rifle’ and for their own protection had to be moved to a padded room (ibid.).

The term ‘dissociation’, which referred to various forms of post-traumatic mental illness, gained in usage in the 1920s. Dr W. Brown, who wrote in the *Times* in 1927 about his use of hypnotic cures for the still-traumatised victims of the trenches, described his patients as men who exhibited a ‘twofold dissociation’ (“Hypnotic Cures”). Firstly, they experienced ‘a dissociation of the memory of events immediately following upon the shell explosion from memories of earlier and later parts of [their lives]’ (ibid.): memories did not connect in a logical, linear way, within their life narratives. Secondly, they suffered from ‘a dissociation of these memories as mere intellectual awareness, from the accompanying emotional reaction of fear - tremors, sweating, mutism, paralysis, which were of a physiological nature’ (ibid.). A memory, for example of warfare, could be recalled safely and often, but the physical symptoms of fear sprang up unannounced, at which time the sufferer lost control over and intellectual awareness of their body. These are the terms in which insane automatism was understood. Not as the rising up of an alternate self – the contrary figure of the ‘double’, a Hyde with his fully fledged deviant character – but the dissociation of the thinking self from the body. The unconscious, a residue of fragments of memory, many of them painful, and intense, detached emotions, came to supremacy, blocking out the knowing functions of mind and sparking a host of physiological symptoms over which the individual had no control. In such an illness, the self is especially fallible and easily unseated.

A case which powerfully illustrates the extremes of dissociation came to trial in 1939. It concerned Dr Lockhart, who was judged guilty but insane after murdering his wife during an ‘emotional storm’ linked to First World War trauma. Lockhart injected his wife with an anaesthetic and then let gas flood from a fire into their house, both of which acts were attributed to previously ‘excluded’ ideas which had flooded his consciousness. During his attack, he had behaved like ‘an automaton’ because, according to one medical witness, he was ‘suffering from dissociation between the higher and the lower levels of

the brain.' Afterwards, he claimed to remember very little, and what he did remember had the quality of a 'dream' ("Doctor Guilty, But Insane").

Lockhart's behaviour was attributed to the dissociation of the 'higher' parts of his mind from the 'lower', which left his unconscious in complete control of his body and mind. Fragments of traumatic memories were experienced as if they were happening in the present. Strong emotions emerged and Lockhart felt himself detach from his body, so that it was as if his actions were observed from without. During this period of dissociation, a certain consciousness was, however, revealed by a note he wrote and placed in his hall to warn his servants about the gas he had himself released. The enactment of this thoughtful, moral, even heroic gesture in the midst of the insane killing seemed to suggest that he was to an extent cognisant of the moral implications of harming his servants, and in control of his actions. As the criteria outlined in chapter two suggests, a judgement under a strict interpretation of M'Naghten might have led to his receiving the full penalty, but instead a medical witness convinced the jury that Lockhart's 'morbidly over-anxious temperament, which moved quickly from anxiety to terror, and from terror to imbalance' ("Medical Man Charged with Wife Murder" 1065) accounted for this momentary re-association of the higher with lower functions of the brain. Consistent with the more exacerbated fragmentariness of selfhood as rendered by modernist writers, the judgement of the Lockhart case suggests that the self is subject not only to unseating from its control of mind and body, but to a considerable degree of fluidity in the shifts in and out of control.

Lockhart's action in leaving the note suggested the tantalising possibility that his moral self was engaged in some kind of struggle with the 'lower' functions of mind that had taken over, and it is this possibility that is central to Christianna Brand's representation of insane automatism, as shall be seen. However, in spite of his moments of re-association, Lockhart's defence had initially proposed not an insanity plea, but a defence of 'not guilty'. They took the view that his primary self was not involved in the attack, and not tinged with insanity. '[U]nconscious action, not arising from insanity at all' ("Medical Man Charged with Wife Murder" 1063) was responsible for the attack,

therefore it seemed creditable to claim that the doctor was another person entirely: his conscious self had been so dissociated from his body while he committed the attack that he could be considered as a separate individual in law. Of course, the case of Dr Lockhart was not resolved upon a plea of 'not guilty'. The jury were unable to concede that the doctor would not have committed the crime in full sanity, and that it was an automaton who murdered his wife, and he was judged guilty but insane. That such a plea was even proposed suggests a reluctance to associate the self with the deviant and mysterious content of the mind, even in a case in which the existence of the unconscious and its repressed emotional content was so readily apparent. Even in the face of such ideas, it was desirable to reassert the dignity and impenetrability of the sane, thinking and judging self, and to ballast the 'I' against attacks from the deviant content of the mind.

Unconscious Wish Fulfilment

The premise that dreams give insight into the unconscious and unconscious motivation is a building block of psychoanalytic theory, with the active dream state seen as a physical enactment of the symbolic content of the latent dream state. The performance of suicidal impulses in a somnambulist state by the murderer, Ulrica, of Gladys Mitchell's *St Peter's Finger* (see chapters one and two) conforms to Freud's work on sleepwalking, in particular the assertion that although the conscious mind seems not to be fully in control, the walker often acts with 'certainty' to enact a repressed, unconscious wish (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* 140; 168), meaning that a sleepwalking person might commit a crime they unconsciously wanted to commit. Not only the repressed trauma of a sufferer like Lockhart, but anti-social wishes and other devious desires could be enacted in unconscious states.

Like somnambulism, automatism describes the movement of the body, often to the purpose of committing controlled and organised actions, without the cognisance or activity of the conscious self. In 1922, M. Hamblin Smith proposed that severe repression may explain certain crimes, and may be accompanied by 'fugue states' in

which 'the subject is confused ("disoriented") in time and in place' (72-3). As Smith explains, a 'repressed complex may regain its position in consciousness, replacing an antagonistic complex, which latter may, in its turn, become repressed' (72). In certain forms of insanity the unconscious may gain autonomy, meaning a person may be physically responsible for having committed a crime, may even have *experienced* committing the crime (that is, be able to remember it) but may not be morally guilty of having consciously reasoned, planned and executed the offence. The subsequent repression of unpleasant psychological material meant that criminal acts could conceivably be forgotten afterwards, creating further problems for the legal system.

Some legal thinkers objected to the presentation of automata and amnesia cases offered by the likes of Smith. In 1925 Lord Darling attacked the 'theory that man has two minds, the conscious and the sub-conscious' by noting how convenient it might be from the position of a legal defence: 'witnesses are not hard to find who will explain to any jury that it was the sub-conscious one alone which was active when their protégé committed crime' (20). The plea of insanity, when complicated by the theory of the unconscious, seemed to Darling a subversive doctrine, as in theory any action can be attributed to subconscious volition, with neither law makers nor medical witnesses being any the wiser as to which action truly was unconscious. Furthermore, to Darling, psychoanalysis' exclusively negative view of the unconscious was troublesome: 'But if automata may do wrong unconsciously,' he observed, 'we may well suppose that they may do right, and then none should deserve, or receive, either punishment or reward' (20). The presumption that the unconscious has wholly negative attributes, which Darling found so subversive, will likewise be challenged in the crime novels of Christie and Allingham.

Epilepsy

During the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, it is fair to say that a reader might hold competing understandings of epilepsy. As it is understood now, epilepsy is not so much a specific condition as a range of neurological disorders characterised by seizures during

which extreme electromagnetic activity occurs in the brain. On waking after a seizure, epileptics are often extremely disoriented, find it difficult to locate themselves and recognise others, and experience a loss of memory. Further than this, epilepsy is a highly varied and misunderstood condition, which contributes to a number of psychological disturbances barely understood in the present day, and even less so in the interwar years. During these years, proponents of competing psychological doctrines in the adaptive, psychoanalytic and neurological fields advanced alternative explanations of epilepsy. It could be understood as an inherited or acquired condition, the consequence of injury or disease, or of hereditary defect (see "The Study Of Epilepsy"). Some positivist criminologists saw epilepsy as a dangerous, organic defect and perhaps evidence of born criminality, while psychoanalysts' offered the explanation of 'hysterical epilepsy': a psychosomatic condition which, like automatism as it was understood by Freudians like Smith, enacted unconscious wishes under the mask of an attack.

The extent to which medieval and early modern occult associations with epilepsy survived nineteenth century asylum reform and the rise of rationalist and scientific approaches to the insane was no doubt determined by social proximity to centres of intellectual development. George Eliot's 1861 novel, *Silas Marner,* for example, treats of the irrational fears generated in an isolated village by her title character's catalepsy (a nervous condition associated with epilepsy) and his motionless fugues. At the turn of the twentieth century, fear of epilepsy had as much to do with what vicissitudes of violence might be unleashed in fits and seizures than its possible contribution to social ills. The criminal anthropologist, Cesar Lombroso claims in his posthumously published *Criminal Man* (1911) that epilepsy, 'develops slowly in continuous brain irritation, which causes the individual … to reproduce the ferocious egotism natural to primitive savages, irresistibly bent on harming others' (Ferrero 87). The cerebral constitution of epileptics, according to Lombroso, provided an explanation of how the destructive violence of certain forms of criminality could be organically determined. So too did it link the epileptic with the criminal degenerate – hopelessly destined to 'reproduce the ferocious egotism' of savages.

A twentieth century amalgamation of nineteenth century prejudices, criminal narratives and psychological thought can be seen in Freud's essay, "Dostoevsky and Parricide", which offers a psychoanalytic reading of Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1880 novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. In Dostoevsky's work, the murder of Fyodor Karamazov is wrongly attributed to one of his three sons, Dmitri. Haunting the investigation is the suspicion that Smerdyakov, who is most likely an illegitimate son of Fyodor, is the killer. He was in the house at the time of the killing, but has a strong alibi, in that he was unconscious after an epileptic seizure. Consistent with the view of epilepsy as a form of innate moral deficiency, Smerdyakov has exhibited immoral traits since childhood, and indeed, he later confesses to having committed the crime and faked his seizure. In Freud's reading of the novel, Smerdyakov's symptoms are attributed to a neuroses – hysterical epilepsy – which mimics organic epilepsy. According to Freud, repressed wishes could be expressed symbolically and masked from consciousness during the seizure. In Britain, psychoanalysts were impressed by Freud's diagnosis. In *Epilepsy* (1928), a contemporary commentator explains how the

> essential epileptic … is a pattern of the oral and anal erotic; he is egocentric, emotionally inexpressive and excessively narcissistic. This produces a rigidity and inelasticity of the personality incompatible with flexible living, hence the explosive fit. (Clarke qtd. in Cobb and Lennox 42-3)

It is worth noting that the psychoanalyst' account of the explosive fit following the accumulation of emotional energy resembles the more nerve-centric account of the condition previously offered by Lombroso.

Negative reactions to epilepsy are pervasive in interwar writing and culture. The medical witnesses in Ronald True's trial (see chapter 2) reported that he had a history of epilepsy, which served to support his portrayal as a probable criminal rather than to question his responsibility for his actions. An offhand comment made in *The Devil Rides Out* (1934), an occult romp by the enormously popular interwar writer Denis Wheatley, is a commonplace response to the condition. A group of devil worshippers are observed in a Tam O'Shanter-esque debauch by the hero, who remarks, '[s]ome of them are

probably epileptics, and nearly all must be abnormal'(94). Epilepsy haunted the popular imagination, acquiring sinister connotations and acting as both a catalyst for, and a determiner of, criminality, degeneracy, and violence. The authors of the 1928 myth-busting study, *Epilepsy,* particularly regretted that

> to the average person "epileptic" means the helpless, deteriorated individual, commonly seen in institutions, rather than the person who, in spite of occasional attacks which are perhaps unknown to others, is carrying on his or her work in the world. (Cobb and Lennox 44)

Of course, to many, the fact that fits could pass unnoticed was one of the most threatening aspects of the condition. This was because violent activity was most commonly associated not with the grave, debilitating *grand mal* seizures, but with the lighter confusions and blank-outs of the *petit mal.* A medical witness in a murder trial reported in the *Times* in 1929 defined the condition according to its attendant dangers: '*Petit mal* [is] a condition that was sometimes followed by post-epileptic automatism, in which condition a patient might carry out certain perfectly rational actions, but might know nothing whatever about them' ("Man's Throat Cut").

Aside from the immediate symptoms of seizures, the fact that many epileptics ended up in mental institutions, borstals and prisons contributed to the condition's sinister connotations. While educational reformers like J. Taylor Fox argued that the exclusion of epileptic children from classes by uninformed teachers meant they developed the sense of being outsiders and, with time on their hands and little else to occupy them, turned to criminality (1-7), less sociologically sophisticated interpretations of the statistics proved more influential. A.F. Tredgold shared Lombroso's view that the high rates of epilepsy in prisons and borstals could be taken as evidence of its connection with criminal insanity. Criminal impulses were imagined to be the natural outcome of a condition whose sufferers could emit sudden torrents of abusive language (Tredgold 318), were generally 'impulsive, undependable and difficult to manage,' and in some cases were subject to destructive outbursts characterised by 'violence and irresponsibility' (ibid.). Interestingly, Tredgold notes, these outbursts were involuntary,

and usually occurred in the light seizure of the *petit mal*. Actions during this state were of such

> a highly co-ordinated and apparently purposive nature that it is difficult for the onlookers to believe that the patient is unconscious. They are generally followed by severe headache or deep sleep, and on recovery the patient has no recollection of the attack. (318)

Public discourse on the criminality of epileptics was no doubt shaped by press coverage of violent cases involving sufferers. Many reports on crimes involving epilepsy were published in the *Times* between 1920 and 1935. What was particularly threatening about epilepsy was that crimes committed by its sufferers seemed to manifest wicked intentions. As Darling's criticism of insane automatism defences suggested, many doubted whether such crimes could be committed without the individual being cognisant of their actions, or without the enactment of will. Should epileptics, like automata, be held responsible for the content of their minds? On the other hand, the figure of the epileptic could be seen to embody widespread concerns about the fallibility of selfhood and its dependence upon both the unconscious content of the mind and contrary constitution of the body. The epileptic could be seen as a grotesque exaggeration of fears of individual uncertainty, determined by the matter of the mind and the deviant wishes of the unconscious, unable to resist the debilitating seizures, scientifically misunderstood and medically incurable.

Four murder trials which took place at intervals throughout the period and were covered extensively in the *Times* exemplify attitudes to, and understandings of, epilepsy available to a golden age readership. In terms of narrative, a predictable formula emerges; also collocating are a series of questions and issues for which the reports present comparable, although by no means confident, answers. At the moment of seizure, the sufferer shifts from being a normal participant in whatever scenario is taking place to both a victim and a witness, as perception is suddenly severed. An unconscious, timeless period elapses, then comes the coming-to in a situation which may be quite different from the moment at which consciousness was severed. One of the most

interesting ontological problems raised by epilepsy was the mystery that occurs during the blank out, and sufferers report confusion, anxiety and, if they awake to confront a crime scene, horror. A variation upon this formula is played out repeatedly in press accounts: however, so too do reports acknowledge that they are participating in the construction of a recognisable narrative which may be exploited by criminals. Doubts about the credibility of the unconscious killer defence reflect a tension between sympathy for the sufferer of epilepsy and a concern over permitting such gross lapses to be brushed aside in law. Manifesting contemporary anxieties about the self and probing the limits of credulity when it came to the extremes of physical and psychical dissociation, these mass-media epilepsy narratives had a significant impact upon the narrative strategies adopted by crime writers.

In a 1920 case, an epileptic man was sentenced to death for killing a bank manager in the midst of a botched raid. His conviction demonstrates that epilepsy defences were not always credible to legal authorities, who recognised that they could be exploited. At the trial, his girlfriend is quoted as saying that he was 'liable to fits. She had known him have as many as three in a single day' ("Leeds Bank Murder"). The report goes on: 'When he was recovering he became very violent, and cried out, threatening murder, and apparently imagining battles and charges. After the fits he was like a man in a trance, and was not responsible' (ibid.). A pattern of debilitating fits followed by linguistic, cognitive and emotional disorder is established. However, strategies are also adopted which distance the narrative voice from the report, so that even the dry, objective prose of the *Times* betrays a note of irony. The witness' evidence is made to seem vague and overstated through the accumulation of dramatic details. So too does her assertion that he was not responsible seem biased when drily undercut by the reporter's observation: 'The witness admitted writing letters to the prisoner, one of which began, "My very own darling'" (ibid). In general, a subtle derision of the defendant's epilepsy plea imbues the account. That such a defence is attempted implies that the pattern attacks took was already well established, and there is a sense that in different circumstances, it would be conceivable for crimes to be committed in these

states. Although medical witnesses are trusted to make final judgements on the defendant's state of mind, the symptomatic overlap with other states of emotional disturbance makes it apparent that classifying and confirming epilepsy was particularly difficult.

Similar features can be discerned in a report of 1925, concerning a killer who had suffered from 'brain storms' after a head injury ("Christchurch Murder Charge"). In the 1920 report noted above, accounts of the defendant's previous homicidal impulses were gently disparaged, but in the 1925 account it is emphasised that seizures release both sudden violence and extraordinary strength, by the observation that 'while in a fit during a football match it took four other members of the team to hold [the defendant] down' (ibid.). The report also highlights how the attack brought about, or was catalysed by, intense emotion. The defendant relates how he 'saw red' in the midst of an argument and then 'hit [the victim] over the head with a bottle. He then went off into a fit, and when he came round he had his hands round her neck' (ibid.). Although it is lucidly recalled, the assault with the bottle is treated as part of the fit, and in general the defendant is a competent narrator, knowing for certain that he is the killer despite having no memory of the subsequent attack. He has approached his fragments of memory – the assault with the bottle with the impression received at the moment he awoke – as does the reader of crime fiction, and has deduced what took place between from these fragments. This subjective reordering is an important addition to the pattern established in the previous report. In crime narratives, the detection of what took place during the period of unconsciousness from the flotsam of memory will be exploited for its narrative and thematic potential.

Sudden brutishness was one means of understanding epileptic violence in circulation at this time. Different forms of violence were, however, associated with the condition. In 1929, an epileptic left a gambling session, had a seizure, pursued a man to whom he had lost money down a busy street and cut his throat with a flick knife ("Man's Throat Cut"). The familiar pattern of post seizure trance and amnesia then ensued. According to a witness, the prisoner simply 'walked away' after the attack and sometime

later arrived at a relative's house looking 'dazed and worried' (ibid.). 'I don't remember anything' his relative quotes him as saying. It is observed that the man had a fit in police custody and at trial it was agreed that he committed the crime in a *petit mal*. Reporting of this case betrays no derision, nor are the circumstances of the crime treated as suspicious. The fact that he was carrying a knife and that he chose a victim who had offended him very recently do not detract from the credibility of the defence, and it is accepted that he committed the crime in an 'aura of unconsciousness' and without 'premeditation or knowledge' (ibid.). What the case willingly accepts is that epileptic seizure releases urges, attributable to the petty and immoral inclination of a concealed self, which the individual is normally able to restrain.

In the final case, taking place in 1935, the *Times* reports how a man shot a girl three times and strangled her, afterwards dumping her body in a water tank. He was later seen on board 'an omnibus dripping wet and without boots, jacket or waistcoat' ("Brighton Murder Charge"). The familiar pattern of the attack is followed: the seizure, the moment of coming-to, amnesia and confusion. The man remembered having an argument and then (in his own words): 'I got a pain through my head. I started swimming for my life' (ibid.). The murder and his entry to the tank are eliminated, and the tails of memory on either side of this blank joined, awkwardly, together. The man finds it impossible to deduce what took place in between, and in terms of narrative, his account is highly disjunctive. The seizure, described as 'a state of maniacal excitement such as occurred in an ordinary seizure, but without the usual fit' is something the medical witness calls 'masked epilepsy' (ibid.). What is fearful is that a person might do all these things, but not be obviously suffering from a seizure. Epilepsy as such is constructed as an evasive, barely discernible and unpredictable condition, which the individual may not know about – perhaps may not even notice – insinuating itself into everyday life. The 'ungovernable fury' and violence of the sufferer still occur, and it is affirmed that the prisoner can 'perform a number of other acts purely automatically' (ibid.), which overlaps with the evidence that an epileptic 'might carry out certain perfectly rational actions' (ibid.) during a seizure, but know nothing about them.

Defining the forms epilepsy took and the kinds of violence to be expected from epileptics, these accounts demonstrate that narrative disjunction was seen as central to the lived experience of epilepsy. To sufferers, life can be reduced to perceptual fragments without warning. These fragments can sometimes be reordered with inference and deduction, mimicking the narrative techniques of the detective novel. Reports emphasise the points at which narratives stop and where they recommence, and the nature of the event taking place at the moment of pause influences whether the epileptic is confused, frightened or quickly made aware of what took place in the interim. At times, the epileptic is able to detect what has taken place themselves. The result is both terrifying and estranging. At other points, the epileptic remains uncertain of what has taken place, and other voices – medical and legal authorities or witnesses – complete the story for them. Whether these voices are trustworthy depends upon their intention, and witnesses are not always reliable sources of information about what has occurred. In all reports, an alternate source of agency comes to physical autonomy when the thinking self is disabled.

Case Studies

In the medical and literary context outlined above, core themes in discussions of the concealed enemy of the self become apparent. Literature, medical and legal accounts overlap in a broad sense when they represent the 'I' being submerged by other forces, be they mental or physiological, and dislocated from executive control over the body. There is, of course, disagreement about what is released when the self loses possession of the body. Psychoanalytic accounts insist that what takes place is unconscious wish fulfilment, or the re-enactment of repressed, traumatic memories. Physiological accounts sidestep the meaning and emotional source of violent actions in order to attribute them to the discharges of the nervous system, while the premise of primitive instincts being unleashed when the 'civilised' self is incapacitated finds representation across the divergent thought systems. The core dilemma remains: which is the true self? Is it the 'I' that is incapacitated, the unconscious or automatic self, or an amalgamation of the two?

Three crimes novels featuring unconscious criminals exemplify the influence of contemporary accounts of criminal psychology on textual representations of selfhood and the mental illnesses which reduce responsibility, overcome the ego and release concealed desires. While contemporary science and law recognised the uncertainty of fully narrating what took place while the unconscious self was in control, the demands of the detective story assure that such mysteries must and will be revealed. Accordingly, inseparable issues are: who is given the authority to narrate; can witnesses be trusted; is the jargon of medical experts really enlightening; what store should be set by legal precedent; and who, ultimately knows the secrets of the self – the individual or the detective?

Agatha Christie, *The ABC Murders* (1936)

As the narrative techniques of reportage on unconscious killings suggest, the crime scene that confronts the epileptic on waking appears as mysterious and unaccountable as the crime scene discovered in the crime novel. The sufferer is placed in the same position as the reader, the detective, and the innocent person who first stumbles upon the horrific scene. The terrifying and alienating experience of separation from one's physical acts, and of the destabilising recognition of possible deviance within the self, is exploited by Christie in *The ABC Murders.* Supposedly a series of crimes committed by a homicidal maniac, the investigation follows the death of a woman whose name begins with 'A' in Andover, to a 'B' in Bexhill-on-Sea and finally to a 'C'. There is a satisfying symmetry then, when, in a dramatic faint, a man named Alexander Bonaparte Cust hands himself in to a police station as the killer. A diffident salesman who frequently experiences headaches, Cust is the first to suspect that he is somehow involved in the string of murders when he notices that he has been visiting each of the towns at the time of the killings. The reader's suspicion that Cust is the killer mounts as does his own, and both reader and Cust become convinced that he has been murdering people in states of post-epileptic automatism:

> He trotted along the street smiling to himself until he came to the Black Swan where he was staying. …
>
> As he entered the room his smile faded suddenly. There was a stain on his sleeve near the cuff. He touched it tentatively – wet and red – blood …
>
> His hand dipped into his pocket and brought out something – a long slender knife. The blade of that, too, was sticky and red …
>
> Mr Cust sat there a long time.
>
> Once his eyes shot around the room like those of a hunted animal.
>
> His tongue passed feverishly over his lips …
>
> "It isn't my fault," said Mr Cust. (Christie's ellipses, 465-6)

It is apparent that the coming to consciousness moment resembles that of the epileptic who has moved away from the crime scene in a trance, only to find ostensibly conclusive evidence upon him later. In keeping with the formula established in newspaper accounts, Cust remembers nothing of what took place in the interim. He has already considered the possibility that he is a killer, and it is not difficult to take the logical steps that confirm this suspicion.

In the excerpt, the reader has no access to Cust's thought processes, but is an observer of the sequential reasoning he moves through. His shift from pleasure to feverish anxiety implies that he remembers nothing, and by the time that he is excusing himself for his unconscious responsibility – 'It isn't my fault' – the reader, like Cust, has associated him irretrievably with the killings. Of course, Cust remembers nothing and feels nothing because he has done nothing. His guilt is an elaborate red herring, a plot constructed by the real killer to preoccupy the police with a hunt for a homicidal maniac, and to frighten the retiring, nervous Cust to such a degree that he truly believes he has committed the crimes in a *petit mal* and confesses to the killings. The bloody knife he finds in his pocket in the passage above has been hidden there by the murderer while poor Cust was asleep. His presence at the various murder locations at the exact time of the killings has also been engineered by the killer, who paid Cust's wages as a salesman and ensured that he was sent to the locations where the crimes would take

place. A self-interested enemy, not a concealed enemy of the self, are responsible for the string of killings.

Slavoj Žižek has written of the false solution of the alphabet fixation in *The ABC Murders* in his Lacanian study, *Looking Awry.* Constructed by the murderer to distract from the true motive to kill, 'the deceitful first impression' (55) of the false solution convinces the ordinary observer – other characters and the reader too – because it conforms to intersubjective expectations of crime and human motivation. While the detective, with her/his superior, penetrating vision, can discern its constructedness, to the ordinary observer, the false solution (generally the crime scene which greets the reader as a 'clue puzzle', but in *The ABC Murders,* the Cust plot in its entirety) convinces because it is legible: it communicates intelligible meaning. To the detective, the artificiality of the false solution will be proven by analysis of what meaning the murderer *wants* the false solution to communicate, and therefore what was the intention of the deception. For, as Žižek asserts, the meaning of the false solution 'consists solely in the fact that 'others' (*doxa,* common opinion) will think they have meaning' (55). It is to this mundane, ordinary perspective that the murderer appeals when he/she stages the false scene, because the perspective '[exhibits] in the clearest possible way the effect that the murderer intended to produce by his staging of a false scene' (fn.175). This ordinary view, the 'field of *doxa*' is also the perspective the reader is supposed to occupy: the false solution is really designed to baffle the reader.

While Žižek is writing of the false solution of the serial killer, *The ABC Murders* in fact entertains two false solutions: Cust as alphabet fixated homicidal killer (discussed in chapter one), and Cust as insane automaton. Much of the novel's drama lies in the challenge posed by the celebrated nerve specialist and criminal profiler, Dr Thompson, to the reader's belief that Cust has committed the crimes unconsciously. The reader alone has witnessed Cust's moment of revelation with the knife, and knows as well as he does that he has no memory of the killings. His fear that he will commit another crime unknowingly leads him to hand himself in at a police station, practically

in the state of trance in which the reader supposes he committed the crimes, and it is then that Dr Thompson starts to promote his dangerous, jargon heavy theory:

> Cust is saddled – apparently by the whim of his mother (Oedipus complex there, I shouldn't wonder!) with two extremely bombastic Christian names: Alexander and Bonaparte. You see the implications? Alexander – the popularly supposed undefeatable who sighed for more worlds to conquer. Bonaparte – the great Emperor of the French. He wants an adversary – an adversary, one might say, in his class. Well – there you are – Hercules the strong. (485)

Exposing the worst of popular Freudian interpretations, the doctor asserts that Cust does not lose control, but exercises his agency through a loss of control. Thompson goes on to assert that Alexander Bonaparte Cust knew that he committed the murders, and is suffering from a hysterical form of epilepsy, rather than the *grand* or *petit mal* of the true sufferer. '*Cust knows perfectly well he committed* the murders' Thompson asserts (Christie's italics, 484), so Cust's position in law changes from guilty but insane to, perhaps, just guilty.

Thompson's solution is derided by the supposedly daft Watsonian narrator, who is convinced of Cust's unconsciousness of the crimes: 'His denials seem to have a ring of truth in them' he says (484). Recognising the falsity of Thompson's solution, the reader goes against their better judgement to align with the narrator who believes in Cust's unconscious innocence. In this outwardly telescoping perspective, all three – reader, narrator, and Cust – confront the scenario as observers, coming to the same conclusion about the meaning of clues and their restructuring into a logical sequence of events. *Doxa*, public opinion, and the expectations held of epileptic killers are key. As the automata defence seems conceivable to Cust himself and to narrator, it is easily accepted as truth. The rendition of the scene mimics press accounts of epileptic killings, imparting an impression of credibility for the reader, while Cust's denial of any knowledge of the crime impresses the narrator because this is what epileptics seemed to do in such situations: 'I don't remember anything' repeated the killer in the 1929 murder

case when held in custody ("Man's Throat Cut"). Putting the narrator and Dr Thompson aside for the moment, the relationship between the reader and Cust is at its strongest here. Only the reader has witnessed Cust's private realisation that he is the killer, and with Cust the reader has been urged to accept the false solution constructed by the murderer. With Cust, the reader is forced into confrontation with the deviance of selfhood, and encouraged to champion Cust as a victim of the very uncertainties that constitute the reader's own self-doubt.

Ultimately, Cust is found not guilty – in fact, he is found not to have epilepsy at all, just bad spectacles. Whether Christie is distrustful of epilepsy as an account for crime is not clear, but either way, this is not the main message. What the text proposes is that individuals are generally unreliable narrators of themselves, a fact which can be easily exploited by anyone with a little medical knowledge and an understanding of what kinds of criminal behaviour were credible according to the contemporary press. In *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, according to Knight, Hercule Poirot controls the deviance of the narrator, thus consoling (or nearly consoling) fears of the concealed aspects of the self entertained by the reader. In *The ABC Murders*, Poirot performs a similar function, and both the reader's and the suspect's dependence upon the detective is assured. While the self is perceived to be unknown, mysterious, and potentially deviant, the promise that the detective will shore up uncertainties about selfhood is bound up with narrative closure and the detective novel's capacity to console. As shall be seen in *Heads You Lose*, the alignment of the reader with a character experiencing subjective discontinuities only serves to reinforce the necessity of a detective of the self.

Margery Allingham, *Police at the Funeral* (1931)

In contrast to *The ABC Murders,* the prime suspect in *Police at the Funeral* actually suffers from a condition that causes loss of consciousness. The suspect is aware of his ailment, but his behaviour during blank-outs is a mystery. The role of the detective in these two 1930s fugue-killer whodunits is analogous; in order to solve the crime, it is necessary to overcome the illusion of the suspect's concealed, deviant self. The object of

scrutiny is, in keeping with the formula's classic demands, still motivation, but enquiries into conduct during fugue states attest that motivation is something that may not be rational in its intentions or recognisable to the suspect. The proficiencies of the detective, his capacity to discern the significance of a clue, explain away the mysterious and dismiss a false solution, are utilised to deduce the real solution. An accurate portrait of the true (conscious) killer, which undermines legal authorities' enthusiastic accusation of the unconscious killer, ultimately solves the crime.

The private lives of a dysfunctional family are opened up for inspection when Andrew, the most pernicious of the four Faraday siblings, is murdered in the meadows outlying the town. In the early stages of the novel, the oppressive atmosphere of the Faraday's rambling Cambridge town house is emphasised: the décor has not been modified since the 1900s, the spirit of their autocratic, academic father still prevails, and the strange aged-childhood of the siblings – in their late forties and fifties, but as petty and insular as infants – all contribute to a poisonous atmosphere. Repression is a key concept in these early stages, and the reader is primed to accept that the rules and restraints of the household – moral management and the policing of social conduct combined with trivial rules against tea in the mornings and the drinking of beer – have created such a blockage of unfulfilled desires that pathology and murder have become the final means of release. Such are the first thoughts of the detective, Campion:

> The atmosphere of restraint which is so racking in adolescence was here applied to age, and Campion experienced a fear of stumbling upon some weak spot where, beneath the rigid bond of repression, human nature had begun to ferment, to decay, to become vile. (96)

Freud is very much in residence in the household, with its absent and loathed, totalitarian father, its oppressively present, antique and magisterial mother, and its infantilised adult-children.

The string of 'lunatic crimes' (137) completes the picture, and mild mannered Uncle William becomes the prime suspect when he admits that he suffers from automatism and amnesia caused by an unexplained nervous condition. Ostensibly, this is

the ‘weak spot’ predicted by Campion, an outburst of repressed, anti-social sentiment supported by medical explanations and legal precedent. William has no means of accounting for what he has done while ‘out’, and most damningly, he has always come-to in a situation strikingly dissimilar to that which he last recalls. On the fatal day, he remembers having an argument with Andrew, and then coming-to outside the gate to the family home, somewhat late for lunch. In the meantime, Andrew was murdered. Resembling very closely the accounts offered by epileptics in court, William explains how the attack began:

> I remember standing in the road leading to the Grantchester meadows arguing with Andrew about the right way to go home … I remember parting with him. I was very rattled, don’t you know, very upset to think that a man could be such a fool. And that’s when I lost my memory. (115)

Evoking a public discourse of the discussion of violent, unconscious crimes, these details suggest that the guilt lies with William.

This is something that William attempts to reject. He understands his condition as a nervous affliction, no more psychological in origin or significance than a ‘gammy leg’ (113), and claims that he considers it ‘one of the most natural things in the world’ (113). His insouciance is, however, disingenuous, and he betrays his anxiety about his behaviour during these episodes through his insistence that he is ‘morally as innocent as a new-born babe’ (113), and not legally responsible for ‘*any action that I may at these times inadvertently commit*’ (Allingham’s italics, 113). As the frantic family lawyer points out, the law takes a different stance – it ‘is very definite on the subject’ (113). To the police, it is obvious that William is guilty, and towards the novels’ close, the police inspector admits, ‘I didn’t follow up William’s alibi because I was more than certain he hadn’t got one … I *knew* he’d done it, … If this had been an ordinary case he would have done it’ (250). Unquestioning acceptance of the automatic killer plot, supported by vague medical understanding, contributes to lazy police work which might have ended in William’s imprisonment; even if found guilty but insane, the penalty would be Broadmoor rather than acquittal.

Dissociative fugues were already firmly associated with war neurosis, and this connection is made when it is discovered that Andrew was shot with the revolver issued to William when stationed in France. That his condition did not manifest itself until nine months prior to Andrew's death (the time frame of the novel is the present, so the early 1930s) does not detract from the likelihood that William's condition can be traced to war trauma: such protracted incubation periods were not unusual and, as the 1939 Lockhart case shows, William's late breakdown would have been by no means extreme. The novel, however, comically sidesteps the war neurosis explanation in a move which serves as another means of counteracting the automaton solution. William was stationed in France, but at Montreuil-sur-Mer, a name which would have familiar to contemporary readers as the location of the British Army's general headquarters on the Western Front. Far enough away from the front line to be safe, barring a light attack in 1918, the experience of those who held staff jobs in this picturesque, fortified town could not have differed more dramatically from that of the soldiers who were wounded and traumatised in the trenches. A prognostication of his later life, William's war was mundane and insulated, offering no opportunity for heroism or the emotional turmoil that was likely to result in mental breakdown.

The explanation for his dissociation will be more prosaic, and it is the detective alone who realises this. Campion has the capacity to understand character rather than apply psychological principles, to treat the case as unique rather than as a type and, most importantly, to understand the significance of clues in order to reconstruct the missing facts of William's lost half hour. These are things the police force, with their vague appropriation of psychology and tendency to view the crime as standard, rather than singular, are not able to do. Neither is Uncle William, as although the mystery concerns none other than himself the content of his own psyche and the actions of his body are a mystery to him. Albeit slightly more bumptious in his claims for his innocence than Cust, William ultimately relies on the detective to extricate him from conviction through re-associating him with his actions, and exorcising the phantasm of the concealed enemy of the self.

Primarily, this is achieved through attention to traditional clues. The influence of epilepsy narratives in newspapers can be felt in the retelling of William's experiences of previous attacks. In these ostensibly objective, but narratively structured, accounts, fragments of memories, the recollection of profound emotions and the state in which sufferers found themselves on waking all are treated as clues. Accordingly, William tries to piece together the linear order of events through attention to details. In all, he has experienced a mere three attacks. The first time, he recounts,

> I was walking down Petty Cury on a damned hot day. My mind went blank, and the next thing I knew I was standing outside the Roman Catholic church with a glass in my hand. I felt an absolute fool and, naturally, rather alarmed. I noticed one or two people looking at me curiously. The glass didn't tell me anything; ordinary tumbler, the sort of thing you'd get in a bar. I put it in my pocket finally and threw it into a field as I came out of town. (115)

His confusion is caused by the heat rather than any extremes of emotion, but the effect is the same. In the coming-to moment, the surprise of onlookers and his own feelings of embarrassment and alarm are consistent with press accounts. Although he tries to make sense of them, the glass and the church have no relationship to one another – they have no meaning, in Žižek's sense of the term. The second account is more bizarre. After dinner, he 'remembers walking down to the gate with Andrew …. I remembered nothing more until I found myself shivering in a cold bath' (115). The glass, the Roman Catholic church and the bath are equally mysterious, and William is unable to deduce their meaning and understand what motivations he is pursuing in the fugue state. The possible explanations for the acts are more frightening than their arbitrariness, given that the narrative works to imply that William is the killer, and that anti-social desires were widely supposed to be revealed in unconscious states. Had he meant to do himself harm in the bath? Are there sexual connotations to this act? Is the church some kind of symbol of repression, and if so was he going to throw the glass at it? It is no surprise that William was alarmed.

In an act which recalls Žižek's retelling of the role of the detective according to Freud's techniques of dream analysis, the detective ignores the supposed symbolic meaning of the clues. Instead of trying to integrate them into a coded language of pathological wish fulfilment, he concerns himself with their relevance to William alone. The church, he reveals, was just a coincidence, and the significance of the glass had been obscured by the weighty associations of Catholicism and the assumption that his placement there must have a meaning. The presumption that William had found his way to the bath alone also added an unnecessarily pathological tone to his condition. His submersion in the cold water was most likely a cruel trick of Andrew's, and once this explanation has been hit upon, and the church dismissed, due attention can be paid to the glass. Not one of a range of arbitrary and mysterious details, but the one actually significant detail, the glass attests to William's profound and actuating motivation when unconscious. He has spoken about his fondness for a drink and his mother's prohibitions before – in the same conversation, in fact, in which he admitted to his attacks. Campion alone noticed this, and explains what occurs in William's blank outs:

> he had walked into a public house, ordered a drink and walked out with the glass in his hand. After all, amnesia is a remote form of paralysis, isn't it? The mind rejects memory, often because memory is unpleasant. Memory means restraint. Uncle William loses his memory and loses his restraints. He satisfies his natural desire. He has his drink. (143)

Utterly conventional according to appropriations of the Freudian model of mind, the only difference with Campion's account of William's amnesia is that his natural desires do not run into murderous pathologies, but to his innocuous desire for a pint. The mechanisms by which he obtains his objectives – the blank out, the disabling of restraint, the unconscious action, the satisfaction of desire and its subsequent repression through amnesia – are consistent with a psychoanalytic account of automatic action as wish fulfilment. William was following the dictates of his unconscious, but the extreme austerity of the household, his mother's prohibitions against alcohol and his generally subjugated existence mean that the act is a genuinely deviant one.

Throughout the investigation, the police inspector has bewailed the absence of a psychologist to explain the baffling traits of the suspects: 'I don't see how their minds work' (81); and '[t]his is a job for a psychologist' (142) he complains. However, and in spite of the appropriation of Freud to account for William's fugues, a general resistance to psychology as a discipline is evident in the novel. It is no coincidence that the true killer is an avid collector of 'the more modern psychologists' (103). As the family matriarch, who emerges towards the novel's close as a particularly intelligent and erudite woman, notes: 'I do not care for the modern psychologists, so I cannot tell you the new names for the old disorders' (243). Alongside her classically inflected understanding of human mentality, is a distrust of psychology as an objective science. Campion states:

> The difficulty about psychology is that it hasn't any rules. I mean, if one person can imagine the state of mind in which another might perform certain acts, then these acts are sound psychology. In order words, given a person's batty enough, there is nothing he or she may not do. (180)

That fallible individuals, with their tendency to empathise and to project their emotional life onto others, practice psychology is its major weakness. For William, a public discourse of insanity replete with narratives of automatic killing make it easy for investigators to imagine that he is the killer. Structuring the expectations of characters and readers alike, assumptions about unconscious deviance become calcified into a rule, but in William's case, they are not applicable. Psychology may be supposed to have firm and fast rules, but the novel suggests that its insights should be used fluidly, without trying to tie up all loose ends according to principles which may turn out to be speculative, subjective and ungrounded in fact.

Far superior is the art of detection. Submitting all facts to interrogation, the detective is not concerned with concealed deviance and the complexities of the self, nor with the empathy or introspection which might help to reveal the individual's secrets. The true self is revealed through attention to the individual's acts in the world, not through depth analysis or the application of doubtful rules. This is why the detective, rather than a psychologist or even the individual concerned, is able to articulate who we

are and what, really, we are like. In *Police at the Funeral*, Campion clears William's name by attention to the glass, but in an interesting dispersion of the detective's skills, William is shown to have a glimmer of the detective's prowess. Rather than trying to clear his name by defending the content of his unconscious mind – praising Andrew and boasting of his love for him, or rejecting any concealed deviance on his own part by talking of his excellent record of mental health and his lack of repressive pathologies – he makes a practical observation:

> I couldn't have killed Andrew. I didn't take a chunk of rope to church with me. … I wear a very tight overcoat. Very smart. Why, I can't put a prayer book in my pocket without it looking like a hip flask. But a chunk of rope! Someone would have noticed it. (120).[15]

A mode of reasoning that privileges material facts open to public scrutiny, William's emphasis upon the empirically verifiable qualities of the case, rather than upon the metaphysical mysteries of his own self, raise him in the detective's estimation: 'It was evident that a great deal of what Uncle William said was pertinent' (120), Campion reflects.

Christianna Brand, *Heads You Lose* (1941)

The title of Brand's English country house mystery playfully refers to losing one's head – a pun in a novel about madness and decapitation – but also evokes the opposing but indivisible two sides of a coin. The title is therefore apt, as the novel, through its depiction of the madness of the killer, Pendock (Pen), proposes that duality is a core quality of selfhood. Madness itself is seen as a tussle between good and evil, which pits the conscious 'I' against the truest manifestation of the concealed enemy of the self.

There are many similarities between the delineation of Pen's madness and the Lockhart case, and it is worth drawing attention to them as it is highly possible that Brand would have been aware of Lockhart's case. The doctor's medical career meant that the case received wide attention in the medical press and, as Brand herself had

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15 Andrew's hands were bound together with a thick rope when his body was found.

worked as a nurse and had married a surgeon, it is possible that the unusual details of the case and trial would have attracted her attention. More publicly, a detailed account of the trial was published over two days in the *Times*, and the verdict received front news page attention ("Doctor Guilty, But Insane").

Like Lockhart, Pen has experienced a trauma – discovering the body of a dead girl in the woods – but has repressed it in a similar manner to a war neurotic, because he is a man and an upper class landowner who needs to maintain decorum and control, unlike the 'terrified local' (13) who was with him at the crime scene. The war is not mentioned in *Heads You Lose*, but the threat of death and madness hangs over the family from the novel's first pages, with the wood that borders the estate functioning as an ominous reminder of the horror of the old crime, pushed repeatedly to the depths of Pen's unconscious. Brand's close delineation of upper class responsibility and the figuring of Pen makes him the novel's pivotal figure of masculine reason and control, and he is called upon to inspect the bodies while the women faint. His subsequent breakdown overlaps with Elaine Showalter's account of shell-shock, which she describes, after Freud, as the consequence of a conflict with masculine ideals of stoicism in the face of extremely disturbing events (*The Female Malady* 169). Instead of stoicism, Pen was deeply scarred by the traumatic encounter. The feelings of shame and guilt he experienced because of his 'emasculated' response persist while his memory of the response itself has been repressed; in trying to locate the source of his great feeling of shame, he has erroneously conflated his emotions with the imagined guilt of the maid's killer.

Lockhart's experience was traced back to the massacre of his platoon in 1918. Throughout the 1920s he suffered blank outs in surgical theatres and moments of dissociation, although it was not until 1939 that he murdered his wife ("Medical Man Charged With Wife-Murder" 1064). In contrast, *Heads You Lose* is set a year after the death of the maid. Affirming the psychoanalytic dictate that the unconscious does not conform to linear time, for Lockhart and Pen the traumatic memories have disconcerting immediacy. Pen turns white when the crime is mentioned, can barely glance at the

woods in which the body was found, and must force traumatic images out of his mind. Events in his romantic life catalyse the resurgence of traumatic memories, and when he realises his love for his adopted niece Fran will be unrequited, conscious checks upon his psychic trauma break down. The first victim, a woman who insulted Fran, is strangled, just as the maid was. Pen re-enacts the violence he witnessed as the concealed enemy of the self – the part of him that did not respond adequately to the death of the maid – achieves autonomy.

In a narrative device that calls to mind Lockhart's case, Pen experiences mysterious dreams. These dreams, in which he approaches a mysterious woman and grips her chin as he tries to turn her face towards him, prefigure the discovery of the murders, and the reader later realises they are 'screens' to his memories of the attacks. His condition, insane automatism, is constructed through the accumulation of his symptoms: his headaches; the 'mist like blood' which 'passed before his eyes' (29) when he discovers the corpse; his attempts to repress horror ('he closed them to shut out the horror of it' 29); and his movement 'like an automaton' (32). He is constantly blocking out horror, although his conscious personality is highly sympathetic – the 'kind and dependable and safe and *strong*' (Brand's italics, 157) head of the household.

Early in the novel, the family suspected that a homicidal maniac was committing the murders, however they are soon convinced that the killer must come from within the family circle. None consider that the homicidal maniac could be one of them, and so it is a shock to all when Pen's true mental state is revealed at the dénouement at the exact moment that another character is being arrested for the murder. Pen realises that he can remember a detail about the killings that only the murderer could know, which would be impossible unless he himself was the killer: 'And suddenly he knew the truth, the real truth; and the truth was so horrible that something snapped in his brain' (211). What snaps is his repressed memory of the killings, and he is thrown back into the same dissociated state in which he committed them. This narrative shift simulates the workings of the mind of the insane murderer, a place otherwise suggested, imagined and contested in psychological accounts.

In a unique twist upon the dénouement formula, Pen now himself plays detective, analyst and murderer. While the supposed detective, Cockrill, has failed to deduce that Pen was suffering from his murderous delusion, Pen-as-detective now reconstructs events as if an observer, but in his case, repressed memories fill in the details previously left blank. He remembers clearly 'those bleeding stumps of necks, of the swing of the hatchet and the sickening scythe of the train' (212). Rather than the formal detective figure, Cockrill, Pen becomes the authoritative detective of the self as he reunites the clues of the killings with his own memories, now accessible in the unconscious state.

The narration of these events, their cause and symptoms and the phenomenology of disassociation can be compared with the account of Lockhart's crime, and there are further similarities in the experience of dissociated personality. Lockhart explained how: 'he began to get an image, the image of his wife's body, and it seemed cold. "There was a strong smell of gas … They are images in my mind, just as one recovers bits of a dream'" ("Doctor Guilty, But Insane"). During Pen's dreams, he unknowingly commits the crimes, and one character muses near the novel's end, '[s]ometimes there are dreams – a recurrent dream, not necessarily anything bad or terrible, but always the same one. I wonder if Pen had a dream' (219). It is a contrary shift of perception when real world events have the quality of a dream, and dreams leech into and become constitutive of reality. The pre-eminence of the knowing self and its ability to obtain reliable knowledge about the concrete world, are shown to be contingent, as the dissociated mind warps or masks sense experience unbeknownst to the core subject.

There are further similarities between the two cases. Lockhart was acting automatically while he committed his crime, and yet he acted decisively and with a degree of control and purpose. This is quite distinct from the traditional view of the homicidal maniac – originating in the wild beast test of late eighteenth century criminal law – which Cockrill espouses:

> The girl had been tied up and then decapitated with the scythe; most homicidal maniacs, whatever they may do afterwards, kill their victim with their hands or with anything they may happen to have in their hands – they

> strangle or bludgeon or slash or stab. The lust to kill is strong, and they don't waste time on fancy stuff like tying the victim up first. (55)

Cockrill is trying to prove that the killer comes from within the family, as clearly there is an order to the crimes which suggests motive and intention. However, he does not point out that these can be a feature of automatic action in insanity, which suggests that his medical knowledge has not kept up with professional opinion. This interchange with a medical witness at the Lockhart trial was quoted in the *Times*:

> If a man is able to get the necessary implements and give a hypodermic injection of evipan, does it not indicate he knows what he is doing? - Not necessarily. The executive side of the mind may remain intact while the knowing part of the mind may be suspended. ("Doctor Accused Of Murdering Wife")

In comparable fashion, Pen's actions are reducible to executive functions of mind, as his knowing and moral self is suspended. What is left is a shadow of the core identity – an estranged pattern of selfhood recognisable because it follows patterns that may seem familiar, through habit, through their reiteration in memory or their persistent half glimpsed presence in fantasy life.

Pen's crime may have been rooted in the repression of his own feelings of inadequacy when confronting the maid's corpse, but it is manifested in killings which demonstrate his excessive anxiety for Fran's safety. Overlaps, again, are detectable with the Lockhart case. The doctor's obsession with injections was rooted in his fears of killing patients. In his evidence at trial, he explains, 'it was not due to a shrinking from responsibility so much as to a great anxiety for the unconscious patient' ("Medical Man Charged with Wife Murder" 1065). So too was he obsessed with his household's safety as the international situation deteriorated before the announcement of the Second World War. He lived in an area described as 'vulnerable' (1064), was working as an Air Raid Precautions warden and, although he 'was doubtful of his own adequacy' (1063), he was expecting to perform medical duties. He was also concerned about the 'disintegration of social life which they feared might follow if war came' (1064). As a medical witness

said at the trial, in cases such as Lockhart's, sufferers 'have been under great emotional stress, which they have resisted, and have reached a point at which the emotions overcame them' (1064). As Lockhart's earlier emotional stress was called back by the strong emotion of anxiety experienced at the onset of war, so Pen becomes excessively anxious as his beloved Fran seems to be threatened. Pen's two victims are both women who have to some degree insulted Fran: 'She shouldn't have sneered at Fran' Pen reflects on one of the victims (213). It is somewhat ironic that Pen's final attack is on Fran herself, but no more so than the fact that Lockhart murdered his wife. In both cases, the beloved object that is threatened becomes an object of such anxiety that the unconscious wish is to destroy it. As it is related in the reporting of the Lockhart case,

> [i]n the recovery of memory there came a sense of terror lest mutilation should happen to his wife, and the night following recovery he had dreams of his wife and of war and mutilation' ("Medical Man Charged with Wife Murder" 1065).

At the same time that Pen feels a deviant urge to destroy Fran, he wants to protect her, and this struggle between conflicting desires is manifest in the disrupted syntax of the dénouement section. In a novel which is stylistically consistent in its employment of omniscient narration and free indirect discourse, the unpunctuated movement to first person interior monologue from the conventional third person narrative mode throughout the section is a gently modernist touch. Although quite different in content, it is reminiscent of Dorothy Richardson's stylistic ventures in her *Pilgrimage* sequence (1915-38), and here indicative of psychological dissociation:

> His fingers began to curl for the feel of it, for the sweet, warm feel of her throat, Fran's throat, who would never be his. I ought to be destroyed. I'm mad, I'm dangerous, and this is Fran. I ought to be dead. (214)

The bland, informative tone of the last three sentences attempts to quell the more sensual tone of the first, reflecting a contest between the excesses of the deviant self and the logical, restraining voice of the ego. While, bodily, he is strangling Fran, mentally he is in a dissociated state, and it is interesting to note that throughout the section the first

person voice is overwhelmingly used as it is above, to explain and to attempt to restrain, rather than to revel in the mischief of the body. When Pen has moments of lucidity, he narrates his fears and his dawning realisation of his own guilt, but he does not fully identify with the murderous mind. He can merely look on as a distinct, dissociated observer, terrified by his physical compulsion and helplessness:

> "I'm mad!" he thought. "God forgive me, I'm mad and I'm murdering Fran. I did this to Grace Morland and I did it to Pippi Le May and now I'm doing it to Fran and I can't stop myself." (212)

Although Pen is, in practical terms, as close in proximity to the concealed enemy of his self as possible, they are not one and the same. In contrast to *Roger Ackroyd*, the reader is not tricked into occupying the 'I' of the deviant self – with Pen, the reader looks on aghast as an observer of an appalling crime, cognisant of the 'great waves of horror and helplessness and despair' (213) that wash over Pen. The memories of the murders, the sensation of the present attack and the lust to kill are accessible to Pen as facts of the case, but not as fully lived experience.

Of course, Pen's recognition that he is mad has a touch of bathos, and can be criticised in the same way as the M'Naghten rules were by Henry Maudsley, who was appalled that the law expected the madman to be 'reasonable in his unreason, sane in his insanity' (qtd. in Whitlock 23). *Heads You Lose* sounds a comparable note of responsibility, and Pen's movement from unconscious criminal to detective of himself is only achieved when he transforms himself from a rational observer to the controller of deviance – a deviance which is, of course, his own. Pen can only overcome his murderous self with an act of re-association directed by the will, and that this is treated as a battle of good and evil implies that mental illness can awaken concealed irrational and malevolent drives which the 'good', rational, self-knowing ego has ultimate responsibility to overcome. The following excerpt details Pen's breakthrough moment:

> Good and Evil: heart and mind wrestled together in a few black seconds that lasted a hundred years. I, Pendock, I'm mad. I'm dangerous … Why don't they kill me, why don't they save her from me? And then triumphant, ringing

like a clarion through the wreckage of the splendid brain: "I must save Fran. I must save her. I must save her from myself!" (214)

The division of the self into warring opposites, polarities of good and evil, owes much to the nineteenth century writing on duality of Hogg and Stevenson. There is something of a retreat from the more complex, modernist entanglement of selves perceptible here, as if the old duality presents a more reassuring, because divisible, notion of identity. Pen's act of naming and his repeated use of the word 'I' demonstrate that he is experiencing, even enforcing, a re-association of his divided self, but one that can only end in destruction. His suicide is an act of killing his other self, and as such is treated as a heroic act.

In terms of the long detective tradition, the moment at which Pen recognises himself as composed of duelling, dual identities, and morally associates with the core 'Pen' reflects the generic reunification of the narrative begun at the dénouement. While previously he was not responsible for what he did, now that he is able to perceive his concealed self as actor, he becomes responsible. Ultimately, his suicide is the moment of justice which completes the dénouement. That Pen, rather than Cockrill, brings about this resolution, assures that the detective function has changed hands. Of course, in many novels characters commit suicide to escape justice, or are encouraged to commit suicide by the detective to spare their family name. That is not quite what occurs here. A detective like Cockrill cannot do what is necessary to reconnect the self. Unlike *The ABC Murders*, there are no medical figures in the novel, so there is no suggestion as to whether a psychologist could have helped. The concealed enemy of the self is ultimately something over which the solitary, perceiving self has responsibility.

After his suicide the survivors conclude that Pen was insane, either due to bad heredity, trauma or automatism. Whatever the diagnosis, they agree that he was irresponsible for the murders and is, perversely, the saviour of the novel, having sacrificed himself to save Fran. He receives some help from Fran's dog, Aziz, who gnaws at his trouser leg throughout the attack and is instrumental in bringing the unconscious and dissociated Pen back into full cognisance of his body. However, it is suggested that he was only able to overcome the deviance of his self because of the

original constitution of his mind. The heroism of his act of will in overcoming his deviant lust to kill is emphasised, at the same time as the 'wreckage of the splendid brain' (214) and ' the great, good heart' which 'beat like a gong' (213) throughout his attack are credited for enabling his original, moral self to triumph. 'Pen' may be a victim of the concealed enemy of the self, as well as an observer of the crimes he commits; he is not much more authentically himself, however, in his brave overcoming of the deviant unconscious and physical impulses that move him to murder. Even in this self-affirming act, he is constituted by the original splendour of his brain*;* not the physiological entity that experiences headaches, was probably epileptic, and was inherited from a mother who 'died abroad' (215), but the matrix of responsibilities and privileges he represents as the feudal landowner, rational male and father figure. These are all decisive and determining factors which enable him to exercise the power of will to overcome his repressed trauma and homicidal urges. The primacy of the 'I', the thinking, judging, conscious self, is ultimately reinforced, even when it is most utterly obviated.

Nihilistic, even paranoid responses to the modernist focus on the psychological complexity beneath the surface of consciousness are exemplified in Christianna Brand's *Heads You Lose,* Allingham's *Police at the Funeral* and Christie's *The ABC Murders*. Portrayals of the criminal mind articulated reader's fears about unconscious deviance, and problematised the notion of rational motivation. Like their modernist peers, crime authors were drawn to plots which reflected the experience of mental illness and war trauma, conditions which threatened to quell the psychological blocks upon repressed horrors, ambivalent attitudes and the mind's uncanny content. These themes spoke to the modernist tendency to view the individual as disintegrative and in a fragmented state. To the authors of *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930*, much of this writing responded to contemporary crises, when 'all realities have become subjective fictions' and when the recognition of complexity and multiplicity within the subject occasioned 'the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character' (27). The composite, fractured characters of modern literature, the authors

suggest, could not achieve the completion or self-knowledge strived for by characters in traditional realist fiction. Personal aberration and miscellaneous, unfamiliar thoughts threatened to surface, while consciously calculated rational motivations might prove to be psychological screens for darker, unacknowledged desires. The experience of selfhood in the modern novel and crime novel alike could be one of alienation, as inward experiences of disorder and fractured communication between a character's several, irresolvable aspects perplexes traditional notions of developmental selfhood and individual integrity.

Of course, an alternate trajectory was also being followed in modernist writing. In *Modernist Self ,* Denis Brown explains:

> self-fragmentation can be reassessed as a form of self-diversification and self-plenitude … by dismantling integral selfhood, the Modernists also deconstruct egoic repression and suggest that self-wholeness consists in the acknowledgement and balancing of disparate self-parts. (12)

Insight into the complex nature of selfhood generated fear, but so too did it enable writers to blur boundaries between pathological and normal thought processes, loosening the repressive hold of the ego and opening up the possibility of liberation – from social norms, guilt at one's ulterior inclinations and entrapment within static identities. As authors recognised the positive, emancipatory consequences of accepting psychological complexity, the fragmented modern subject need not be seen as broken, the secrets of the self not necessarily purely negative; indeed, the subjective realm could afford a means – perhaps the only means – to gain valid knowledge about the world. Was this alternate modernist trajectory reflected in crime fiction? That is a matter for a new debate.

V. Irrational Detection

Crime fiction is at heart a quest for truth, but the way that truth is attained and assessed is far from uniform. Golden age crime writers were in general outspoken in their demands for methodical, scientific deduction. Their invocations against detection as guesswork, intuition and second-sight, were expressed in the copious lists of 'rules' published during the period, giving a formal structure to the beliefs about truth and reality installed in their narratives. There is an objective reality, crime fiction tells us, which can be known to rational observers. Although it may be distorted by the beholder, knowledge about reality can be ultimately verified.

In his "Ten Commandments" (1929), the British crime writer Ronald Knox insists that the detective must never 'have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right' (Knox 195). Even though it is supposed to be beyond the ability of the average individual to have come to the solution on their own, the thought process that has led to the detective's solution must be coherent and comprehensible. On election to the British Detection Club, crime writers including Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie and G.K. Chesterton took the oath which bound them to write novels in which protagonists

> detect the crimes presented to them using those wits which it may please you to bestow upon them and not placing reliance on nor making use of Divine Revelation, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence, or Act of God. ("Detection Club Oath" 198)

North American crime writers also celebrated the application of brilliant reasoning to verifiable facts. In "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" (1928), S.S. Van Dine declared:

> a detective is not a detective unless he detects. His function is to gather clues that will eventually lead to the person who did the dirty work in the first chapter; and if the detective does not reach his conclusions through an analysis of those clues he has no more solved his problem than the schoolboy who gets his answer out of the back of the arithmetic. (190)

Van Dine advised an empirical, 'rational and scientific' (191), method of detection, disparaging the solutions of 'pseudo-science and purely imaginative and speculative devices' (191) including séances and word-association tests. Contemporary fads for Spiritualism and the psychoanalytic methods of probing the unconscious developed by Carl Jung do not meet Van Dine's rigorous 'scientific' criteria.

In practice, golden age crime fiction seems to epitomise the rejection of the subjective view. Characters are encouraged to think clearheadedly about facts as they recount their own, flawed impressions of the crime. Their misapprehensions and partial glimpses are analysed, what is useless is eliminated and what is pertinent is fixed upon so that an objective reading can be achieved by the detective. Approaching the truth of the mystery is treated as a process of removing the subjective view and, through the agency of the detective, arriving at a single objective narrative which will supplant those of other characters and readers alike.

Seeming to contradict these outspoken demands for reason, feminine intuition is notably reclaimed in Christie's writing. Intuition, supposed to be a collection of irrational hunches, subjective perceptions, scraps of gossip and flimsy guesswork, is respected by Poirot as a form of unconscious recording and reordering of facts, where the unconscious of the average woman unselfconsciously does the same work as the celebrated consciousness of the detective. The unconscious as a rational recorder of memories and impressions otherwise lost, is a mysterious counterpart to the conscious mind: it performs identical rational functions out of sight of the perceiving subject. For this reason, Poirot employs the talking method to elicit details from witnesses where direct questioning would fail. However, he still insists upon his own elevated reasoning, merely employing women as useful witnesses and sounding boards, emphasising his superior capacity to incorporate their unconscious abilities into his fully-realised, self-conscious method.

Although Christie's acknowledgement of the formative functions of the unconscious went some way to introducing ideas about mysterious and irrational psychological processes into crime writing, logic, problem-solving, and meticulous

attention to details triumph in her Poirot novels. This is true even in the case of Miss Marple, in whom Christie introduced a detective who is the average woman personified. Marple has been cited in support of the argument that golden age novels express dissatisfaction with the detective figure as an extraordinarily intelligent, reasoning masculine hero. Marple's intelligence does not, however, resemble the 'female intelligence' that many writers took a stance on during the interwar period. In *Women: An Inquiry* (1925), for example, Willa Muir asserts that women are stronger in unconscious life than men. While '[c]onscious life implies rational thinking' (14), the unconscious is concerned with 'growth rather than form,' (15) and is 'essentially emotional, spontaneous, and irrational' (15). These feminine attributes should not be disparaged, Muir asserts, but respected as distinct intellectual qualities equal to man's and vital to human success**.** In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf famously asserts that 'it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top' (28), in a section in which the undirected study (literally, the scribbling) of the untrained and excluded woman attains a truth not extractable as a pure nugget from text books by means of the methodical scholarship in which male students have been trained. In sympathy with Woolf, Dorothy Richardson reflects upon how she 'groans, gently and resignedly' when critics of her novels accuse her of 'failure to perceive the value of the distinctly masculine intelligence' (12). As Gillian E. Hanscombe states, the 'qualities of intelligence Richardson most prized were not abstract rationalism and analytic empiricism, but the ability to perceive relationships between phenomena and the effort to synthesize feeling and reflection' (6).

To an extent, this is what Poirot's unconscious witnesses are doing, but few of them are gifted enough to perceive the relationships between the phenomena they record in their entirety. What is actually seen in many golden age novels is the privileging of feminine areas of expertise – household details, articles of dress, village gossip – which, though it can be seen as a subversive validation of alternate spheres of knowledge, does not contravene the rational foundations of the form. In *The Intelligence of Woman* (1917), W. L. George notes that a woman, though sometimes illogical when discussing

abstract or complex ideas, 'generally displays pitiless logic when she is dealing with things that she knows well. … many women are expert in the investment of money, in the administration of detail, in hospital management' (17), and the same is true of the female, or 'effeminate', detective. There is nothing unscientific about the methods used to analyse household details: the detective still breaks down the evidence of the crime into ever smaller units, examines them and draws conclusions about causes based on given effects. The female or dandyish sleuth is still 'the apotheosis of the analytical mind in its purest form' as Ernest Mandel calls the detective (17).

Modernist Parallels

The trans-Atlantic insistence upon reasonable and analytical approaches to detection ostensibly pits crime fiction in opposition to the intensified interest in subjectivity and the recording of minute fluctuations in consciousness found in contemporary modernist writing. Holquist, as has been seen, asserts that, faced with unsettling modernist fiction, readers turned for reassurance to interwar detective fiction because of its 'flatness of character' and its 'methodological certainties' (147). To an extent, this is a false dichotomy. The dismissal of psychology as a superfluity also formed a technique in the modernist canon. There is very superficial characterisation in Franz Kafka's plays and stories; equally, the symbolic function of characters, communicative of elemental forces and universal conflicts rather than subjectively bestowed values, was central to Expressionist theatre. Alison Light locates Christie's modernism, perversely, in her fixation upon surfaces and masks: 'the evacuating of notions of character' (66) as she puts it.

More interesting parallels can, however, be drawn between modernist writing and crime fiction. Rather than seeing crime fiction as a comforting negation of modernism, certain texts display the influence of modernist techniques and modernist concerns. Two texts in particular, Dorothy L. Sayers' *Whose Body?* (1923) and Margery Allingham's *Traitor Purse* (1941), published at the opening and the close of the golden age respectively, flout the genre's preoccupation with the exercise of reason and scientific

analysis, instead portraying detection as an emotional, subjective, spontaneous and irrational activity. The intertextuality of these popular texts is more than a concession to high cultural tastes; it alters the traditional authority of the detective in fundamental ways, mounting a critique of the rationalism which, ostensibly, had hitherto defined the form. Ostensibly, because, in spite of the claims of Van Dine and Knox, detective fiction has a long tradition of blurring distinctions between the rational, objective stance and the subjective. What follows is an assessment of this tendency in crime fiction, followed by a theoretical and historical account of anti-positivist trajectories in early twentieth century thought. The significance in the long history of detection of golden age appropriations of the irrational, subjective and modernist will be revealed through these debates.

Reason and the Long Tradition of Detection

Arthur Conan Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes, reclining in his armchair, swathed in a cloud of tobacco smoke, cogitating upon the baffling details of a case, has become an iconic image in the genre of detective fiction. It complements the equally memorable representation of the detective with scientific implements in hand, collecting material evidence, then carefully analysing it before he settles down to deduce its significance. He embodies the values of rationality and reason, demonstrating the ability to think consistently and to an end, to utilise the information to hand, and to verify facts and make judgements based upon the conclusions he has systematically reached. The mediation of Holmes through the narrative voice of an admiring Watson ensures that what is taking place within his mind is mysterious, but the appearance is that superior logic is at work, testing, eliminating and finally locating the solution to the mystery: 'connecting ideas consciously, coherently and purposively' as *The Dictionary of Philosophy* defines the process of reasoning (Greenwood). Possessed of all the mental attributes necessary to elucidate the mysterious elements of the plot, the detective figure is ultimately reassuring: he stands for the triumph of human reason over the irrational and the unknown.

However, just as integral to Holmes' method of deduction are extremes of mood which are far from rational:

> All afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long, thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid, dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes, the sleuth-hound, Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his armchair amid his improvisations and his black letter editions. Then it was the lust of the chase would suddenly come upon him, and that his brilliant reasoning power would rise to the level of intuition, until those who were unacquainted with his methods would look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals. ("The Red-Headed League" 80)

Watson believes that periods of directionless poetic contemplation, unsystematic musical improvisation, and wistful inertia seem to sustain Holmes and prepare him for his more active and analytical occupations. As a doctor, he backs up these claims with science. According to nineteenth-century neuroscientific understanding, Holmes rests his reasoning faculties by indulging his poetic nature, restoring the nerve reserves and nourishing the nerve fibres which are employed and expended during his animated and relentless investigations. To Watson the surgeon, Holmes' artistic recreations are preferable to his alternative methods of relaxation – morphine and cocaine, as described in the opening chapter of "The Sign of the Four" (1890). Artificially stimulating the mind, the drugs have a morbid effects, increasing 'tissue-change' (40) and leading to the physical deterioration of the matter of the mind. Drugs simulate the exercise of reason

without supplying the mind with a problem to solve, like an empty stomach going through the process of digestion, meaning that Holmes' mind 'devours' its own energy and, as Watson fears, may be left with 'a permanent weakness' (ibid.). For Holmes, such secondary effects are 'of small moment' compared to the 'transcendently stimulating and clarifying' (ibid.) mental experience. Holmes dismisses Watson's highly reasonable medical advice, asserting that he craves 'mental exaltation' (ibid.), a feeling only achievable through drugs.

When Watson describes Holmes, he constructs a duality between the detective's poetic and his reasoning faculties drawn from the nineteenth-century trope of the divided self. This is a duality Holmes bolsters, describing detection as an 'exact science' which should be treated in a 'cold and unemotional manner' (ibid.). What Holmes ignores is that this is obviously not how he experiences detection. The elation he feels when high on cocaine comes closer. Holmes displays his exhilarated enthusiasm even when he describes detection, which he calls his 'art' (ibid.). Although Watson is careful to describe Holmes' astonishing solutions as only seemingly achieved through clairvoyance, it is clear that something other than rigorous observation, brilliant reasoning capacities and the application of comprehensive knowledge contribute to his successes. Holmes is inspired by 'the lust of the chase', something which comes upon him 'suddenly'. It is in these heightened states of emotion that his perceptive and reasoning abilities reach the astonishing levels for which he is famous.

Problems with Reason

Dualities of the rational and irrational, emotion and reason, and science and art are each in imperfect opposition in the Holmes stories. To the Marxist scholar Ernest Mandel, this is a contradiction inherent in the form. Mandel associates the rise of the detective story in the nineteenth century with the triumph of modern bourgeois rationalism in social organisation, politics and economics: the dominance of instrumental reason; the capitalist mode of production; secularisation; and positivism – the subordination of all aspects of thought and objects of knowledge into units of data amenable to methods of

analysis – measurement, quantification and abstract modelling – used in the natural sciences. The detective story, which privileges 'clue-gathering' and the accumulation of 'formalized proof acceptable in court' (Mandel 43), seemingly reflects the triumph of bourgeois rationality; but so too does detective fiction manifest rationality's inherent contradictions:

> Bourgeois rationality is always a combination of rationality and irrationality, and it produces a growing trend toward overall irrationality. That is why the detective story, while placing analytical intelligence and scientific clue-gathering at the heart of crime detection, often resorts to blind passions, crazy plots, and references to magic, if not to clinical madness, in order to "explain" why criminals commit crimes. (43)

In its drive to reduce the social field to analysable units of data amenable to the assessment of a bourgeois legal system, rationality ignores the interconnectedness of social phenomena and the relations of power which underlie them. Rationality is myopic, breaking down all social and material relations as things to be measured, quantified, computed while excluding much that is 'beyond' analysis in the process. To Mandel, then, crime fiction manifests the weaknesses of its own rationality when it resorts to 'crazy' explanations to account for crimes: in order to discover the logical chain of occurrences leading to the crime, the more profound and complex explanation of both the crime and the individual who perpetrated it remains mysterious.

In Conan Doyle's stories, Holmes' mental attributes enable him to triumph over the irrational and the unknown in ways that are reassuring. However, this triumph of rationality can also be seen to tend towards domination. Mandel's study is informed by Marxist and Frankfurt School critical theory, so it is appropriate to turn to Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), specifically their first essay, "The Concept of Enlightenment". Here they discuss the rise of experimental philosophy and scientific enquiry from the late seventeenth century, and the accompanying drive to eliminate superstition and ignorance from thought which constituted intellectual Enlightenment. 'The program of the Enlightenment was the

disenchantment of the world; the substitution of knowledge for fancy' (3) Adorno and Horkheimer state, gesturing to the sciences which reveal the functioning of nature and to the technological innovations by which nature is harnessed to human ends. Mythic and religious modes of apprehension are cast out: the supernatural, spiritual and magical are dismissed as projections of human desires and fears onto the natural world. However, in spite of its intentions, the authors state Enlightenment does not eliminate fear. Fear of the unknown is at the heart of the drives to know and to master natural forces which motivate modern science and industry: 'Man imagines himself free when there is no longer anything unknown' (16).

In this irrational drive to eliminate the unknowable, exploitation and suffering are treated as permissible side-effects: 'Knowledge, which is power, knows no obstacles; neither in the enslavement of men nor in compliance with the world's rulers … What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men' (4). Instrumental reason works rationally towards an end, but offers no means of assessing the end towards which it works. Neither does it offer the moral groundwork for a way out of instrumental thought: '[t]he moral teachings of the Enlightenment bear witness to a hopeless attempt to replace enfeebled religion with some reason for persisting in society' (85). Self-preservation as a 'good' is affirmed by reason in the bourgeois order, but emotion is ostensibly withdrawn from rational thought, although it resurfaces, perversely, in the fear driven panic of economic and political practice (91). Another contradiction the authors highlight is that, although the sole unit of Enlightenment law and philosophy is the individual, individualism is turned into a tactic of oppression: 'Enlightenment … excises the incommensurable. Not only are qualities dissolved in thought, men are brought into actual conformity' (12). The dominance of scientific positivism – the 'levelling domination of abstraction' (13) – which seeks to discover the laws according to which all things operate reduces all distinct qualities to commensurable units of data. The discovery of these 'laws' does not lead to greater freedom for the individual, but encourages herd mentality and the conversion of the individual into experimental fodder (84). The collective is enthralled by those who can

understand and dominate on a grand scale (in Adorno and Horkheimer's time, the leaders of Fascism) and thus Enlightenment reverts to the irrational and to myth.

The anti-positivist critique of the Frankfurt School, though considerably abridged here, helps substantiate Mandel's criticism of detective fiction's irrational rationality. So too does it suggest a reading of the contradictions of the scientific, rational view in the Holmes tales, and in detective fiction thereafter. For Holmes, reason is not only refreshed by periods of irrational contemplation, but is always exercised with an irrational, emotional element, and it is perhaps the more reasonable for being so.

Proof of this comes in the figure of Holmes' nemesis, Moriarty. A professor of mathematics with a 'criminal strain', Moriarty is described as Holmes' 'intellectual equal' ("The Final Problem" 200). He is 'a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order,' and exercises a 'deep organizing power' (ibid.), controlling a vast and enigmatic criminal network. While Holmes exercises reason in the pursuit of pleasure – the lust of the chase – Moriarty is objectiveless rationality personified. He is 'extremely tall and thin … pale and ascetic-looking' (200) making it unlikely that his criminal plots serve a self-gratifying end. If he takes pleasure in evil, it is never mentioned. To an extent, the inborn 'criminal strain' by which Conan Doyle explains Moriarty's crimes exemplifies the irrational tendency of detective fiction, unwilling and unable to account for crime at a psychosocial level. However, Moriarty's criminal strain is not mere fantasy or, if it is fantasy, it was at the time of writing scientifically endorsed in the legally recognised category of the moral imbecile (see chapter 3). In this condition extraordinary intelligence combined with a lack of moral sense, and made the moral imbecile a perturbing figure in positivist criminology. It expresses the fear that criminal madness is, at its limits, a form of excessive rationality, bereft of social, moral or emotional attachments. Excessive rationality, not irrationality itself, tends towards overall irrationality.

Affective Knowledge

As Alison Jagger notes, '[w]ithin the Western philosophic tradition, emotions have usually been considered potentially or actually subversive of knowledge' (188). Instead, Jagger asserts that 'outlaw' emotions such as anger 'may enable us to perceive the world differently from its portrayal in conventional descriptions,' (Jagger 191) alerting us to the fact that something is unjust, cruel, dangerous, wrong and so forming the basis of an affective epistemology.

During the golden age, challenges to traditional rationalism coincided with the exploration of diverse theories of feeling in psychology, science, and cultural thought. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, although clearly celebrating disordered and subconscious means of acquiring knowledge, ultimately valorises the absence of strong, negative emotions in the pursuit of truth. Women's writing has been unfairly 'deformed and twisted' (63) by the bitter experience of female oppression, according to Woolf, while the supposedly dispassionate, rigorous and rational studies produced by men – she refers to the works of the male professors who have written scientific, psychological or anthropological tracts about women – far from being written in an objective mood, were penned in 'the red light of emotion' (30), a fact which reveals their bias and limits their worth. Woolf is not necessarily in disagreement with Jagger though, who suggests that gut reactions and emotional responses form the basis of subsequent critical thought and understanding. Woolf's moment of revelation in the British Library comes when she realises why the image of the Professor she has been drawing makes her so angry (31); the Professors, having rationalised their desire for superiority through scientific accounts of women's inferiority, will never be enlightened about the true nature of their emotions or the real driving motivation of their anger.

Psychoanalysis drew attention to the emotional backdrop to rationality, but by the start of the 1920s, Carl Jung had broken with his teacher Freud over the issue of whether an objective, scientific and analytical approach was sufficient to grasp in its manifold complexity the lived experience of the human individual. Freud answered yes, while Jung pointed out the widening gap between Freud's calculations and the subjective

realities of his patients' lives. Jung's translator describes Freud as acting 'like a master-detective tracking down the incriminating complex in the unconscious' (Baynes i-ii), and indeed Freud's standard method began with experimentation, led to data analysis, and ended with the elaboration of a model based upon accumulated facts. On the contrary, Jung asserted that psychology should move beyond the principles of empirical science. Individuals are intuitive and creative, are guided by transcendent values and moved by symbols. They experience the world not rationally, but emotionally and perceptively, and understand themselves as a dynamic and vital whole. An analytic system which fails to recognise this widely misses its mark, and tends towards error.

According to Robert Paul Dunn, during the 1930s 'it was becoming increasingly clear to many that philosophies based on science and strict, rational enquiry were insufficient for dealing with the crises of a society that was expecting another major war' (200). Dunn's statement comes in an essay in which he assesses the lay theology Dorothy L. Sayers began to produce in the 1930s, and in which he traces resemblances between her spiritual thought and her early Wimsey novels. Inspired by Christian tenets, in *The Mind of the Maker* (1941) Sayers asserts that the creative process of the artist can reveal the pattern of universal integration in ways lost to analytic enquiry. The universe is ultimately loving and whimsical, but a comprehensive view is impossible except as it is expressed in creative work, which itself only reflects the ultimate creative work of God. The synthesising process of the artist could illuminate spiritual reality and address contemporary ethical and political situations, but it is integral that the artist accepts human limitation – indeed, this is central to what Dunn calls Sayers' 'comprehensive comic view of the universe' and her 'whimsical vision' (202). The notions of humility, social interdependence and of creative inspiration as a special 'gift' (Dunn 188) are all central to Sayers' vision.

Although referring solely to Sayers' narrative techniques in her later Wimsey novels, Dunn suggests ways of assessing what takes place as Wimsey detects in Sayers' early work, *Whose Body?*. Approaching the mystery not as a puzzle to be thought through rationally, its clues analysed, and its events logically reordered, detection is

instead treated as a creative act over which the detective has limited control. Indeed, in both Allingham and Sayers' novels, excessive rationality is associated with domination, while affective forms of knowing and relating to the world are granted a privileged ethical status. In her war-time thriller *Traitor's Purse* (1941) Allingham consciously refashions her detective as dependent, emotional and ethical, in contradistinction to both his old independent, logical and authoritative self, and to the egotistic fifth column fascists he encounters during the case. In both works, detectives possessing quite different attributes are presented as antidotes to destructive and egotistical rationality.

In Western thought, emotion is stereotypically constructed as the unique province of women a definitive quality of femininity: 'She is emotional, he is not' as Shields summarises (3). This raises an inevitable question: in the work of these female writers, does the presentation of affectively-astute male detectives contribute to an attack upon the age-old superiority of reasonable-masculinity, and a celebration of a feminine epistemology in its stead? While neither novel is nearly so explicit, it is certain that such gender binaries do not stand at each novels' close. The result is not so much a feminised masculinity (as Munt says of Sayers' 'definitely effeminate' [9-10] detective Wimsey) but an individual identity composed of many qualities which can no longer be safely sectioned off as masculine or feminine. Male detectives do not learn from women, but find traditionally non-masculine qualities already part of their identity, a revelation which makes the supposed opposition of masculine and feminine identity meaningless. This is particularly striking in Sayers' later novels: see, for example, *Gaudy Night*, in which the male Wimsey advises the female Harriet that her detective novels are too formulaic and 'jig-saw' like (291), lacking psychological realism and emotional depth. In her critical writing, Sayers displays impatience with essentialism and a distrust of feminisms based upon the elevation of the 'feminine'. Female knowledge is a meaningless simplification, she insists, and when asked for an opinion on detective writing from the 'female point of view,' she responds: 'You might as well ask what is the female angle on an equilateral triangle' (*Are Women Human?* 41). Female experience, as Sayers sees it, is heterogeneous, and as such the only valid way to define and divide

humanity is individually: 'it is my experience that both men and women are fundamentally human, and that there is very little mystery about either sex, except the exasperating mysteriousness of human beings in general' (ibid. 49). While her later Harriet Vane novels foreground female characters with such a diversity of traits and talents as to render mythic the traditional category of women, in *Whose Body?* gender dissent is expressed obliquely: that is, through the non-articulation of the feminine associations of Wimsey's method. While in *Clouds of Witness* (1926), Wimsey's mother dismisses the detective's skills as 'mother-wit, and it is so rare for a man to have it that if he does you write books about him and call him Sherlock Holmes' (106), in *Whose Body?* there is no direct comparison of the male detective with the average woman, as is found in Christie's writing. This is no less than an attempt to negate debates about gendered experience which, judging from Sayers' tone and message in *Are Women Human?*, bored and frustrated her.[16] Instead, by refusing to acknowledge that something unusual for a man, or indeed effeminate, is taking place in Wimsey's mind, *Whose Body?* articulates an individual experience not delimited by gender, and constitutes a representation of character where gender binaries do not dominate.

Modernism

Although, in distinction to the fanatical Moriarty, Holmes's rationality is tempered by his emotional nature, his artistic insights and his humanising vulnerability, for golden age writers a new alternative to the hyper-rational detective was not to be found within the genre, but in the contemporary modernist novel. Amongst its many innovations, the modernist novel revelled in the subjective, recording consciousness in narratives

[16] In her later novels, this tactical non-articulation of gender issues is often abandoned. An important incident occurs in *Gaudy Night*. Wimsey, who is playing a spinet and singing an Elizabethan love song to Harriet, is accused of being effeminate by a jealous undergraduate. 'I have been accused of many things … but the charge of effeminacy is new to me,' (370) he responds. The undergraduate is wrong. Wimsey is not effeminate because he is not performing modern masculinity appropriately. In Wimsey we see many different, historically varied and at times contradictory masculinities being performed at once: courting knight, Oxford gentleman, foppish dandy, brilliant intellectual, retiring scholar, John Mills-style feminist, aristocratic adventure story hero, decorated World War Officer, and shell-shocked soldier.

moulded by internal states of mind and processes of thought, rather than by received fictional structures. In 1919, Virginia Woolf classed much Victorian and contemporary writing as materialist, and criticised it for its focus upon constructing solid, credible locations, furnishings and social scenes, as well as characters defined by their material wealth and status. To Woolf, what had been ignored and obscured was the lived experience of these novels' corporeal, but spiritless, characters. Absent from such works were self-reflection, personal conflicts, minor fixations, fleeting memories and convincing impressions: these books are 'well constructed and solid' but what, 'if life should refuse to live there?' she asks ("Modern Fiction" 186)

Of course, crime fiction is often typified by its staginess and the two-dimensionality of its characters. This un-literary disregard for psychological depth has even been praised as its unique strength: in his rules, Van Dine states that beyond the necessity for verisimilitude and credibility, complex characterisation was a distraction in what should be a spare and streamlined form (191). However, the modernist novel and detective fiction have more in common than the comparison of Van Dine's statement with Woolf's might suggest. Žižek claims that both modernism and detective fiction share 'the same formal problem - the *impossibility of telling a story in a linear, consistent way ...* bearing witness to the impossibility of locating the individual's fate in a meaningful, "organic" historical totality' (Žižek's italics, 48-9). The modernist novel, with its heightened interest in the mediation of reality by its characters, responds to the crisis noted by the authors of *Modernism*: *A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930*, when 'all realities have become subjective fictions,' (27). Reality, historical totality, the comprehensive view, came to be seen as fantastical and unobtainable concepts as the subjective view took hold. Detective fiction follows the same trajectory, offering fragmentary and partial versions of the story which respond to the various impressions its characters have of events. While modernist novels revel in the subjective as the end of art, the detective turns these impressions into facts. Analysis and deduction are the processes by which the detective makes the subjective objective. As analysis of *Traitor's Purse* and *Whose Body?* will show, the subjective and the impressionistic become part of

the method of Sayers' and Allingham's detectives in ways that respond to modernist developments.

The modernist novel was not unique in the importance it placed upon the plausible and sincere representation of human nature, mental life and motivation – this has always been the province of the novel. Likewise, wonder at the mysteries of the mind and commitment to the exercise of self-scrutiny are central to the Romantic lyric, where records of flights of fancy when the mind is at rest or in idleness contribute to a celebration of the enigma of the creative unconscious. The source of divine inspiration, strange outpourings, the sudden, destructive rampage that is followed by a mysterious revelation in Wordsworth's "Nutting" (published 1800) or the depths of passions and fears described by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in "Kubla Khan" (1816) attest to their authors' attempts to plumb the mind, that 'chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething' (line 17) and articulate its uncharted terrain and sublime potential. To Peter Gay, whose account of the shift from Victorian to modern is resoundingly clear, the modernist novel's originality

> lay not so much in its discovery of the mental province as in re-mapping its territory; its experimental techniques were designed to dig deeper – far deeper – than tradition-bound novelists had ever done … Cautious or bold, modern novelists sought to capture minds at work, dreaming, ruminating, hesitating, wishing, in conflict. (190)

Catching the everyday abundance of life, novelists were less concerned with fiction's traditional moments of interest and intrigue – the births, marriages, deaths and love affairs which structured the Victorian novel. Emotional complexity, moral uncertainty and a more realistic disorder behind the surface realism of appearances are the structuring forces of the works of Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, as authors implemented in art the discoveries of psychology. Unconscious mental processes and techniques of recording consciousness were integrated into new representations of character. Both psychology and modernism, according to Mark Micale in *The Mind and Modernism*, 'pioneered new techniques of narration to capture

the inner workings of the human mind and the moment by moment experience of individual consciousness' (2). The interior life of individuals was given utterance, while subjective responses to events which, in the traditional weighting of a novel, would have seemed relatively minor, were delved into as matters of bountiful significance and interest.

To Woolf, the modernist novel probed deeper than the novels of the past, and was accordingly shaped quite differently from older fictions: 'the point of interest' she asserts, 'lies very likely in the dark places of psychology. At once, therefore, the accent falls a little differently; the emphasis is upon something hitherto ignored' ("Modern Fiction" 192). The richness and manifold complexity of mental life was the spur for such focus, the insights of psychology its structuring principle, but access to and engagement with Freud's ideas were not prerequisites: 'even novelists who were not reading Freud … were asking Freudian questions' according to Gay (190). Honest and intimate recording of conscious experience pre-dates Freud; for example Eduoard Dujardin's novel, *The Bays are Sere* (*Les Lauriers sont coupés*, published 1886) introduced the monologue *intérieur*, a 'relatively orderly form of the free associations let loose in pure stream of consciousness, in which links are often resemblances of sounds and sudden memories' (Gay 188). A considerable weapon in the modernist attack on nineteenth-century literary materialism, the interior monologue was seized upon by Dorothy Richardson in her multi-volume work, *Pilgrimage* (1915-1938) and used to produce a more intimate, inward focus upon a character's development than the novel in English had previously permitted. Moments are recorded as they are perceived by her character Miriam, their recording shaped by Miriam's own perception of their magnitude. The everyday markers of time and date dissolve. Moments pass too rapidly when Miriam is in a state of confusion, or elongate because of her immersion in the moment, while divisions between past and present are blurred to reflect the resurgence of memory as seen in this extract from *Pointed Roofs*:

> Miriam's mind groped … classic – Greece and Rome – Greek knot …
> Grecian key … a Grecian key pattern on the dresses for the sixth form

> tableau – reading Ruskin … the strip of glass all along the window space on the floor in the large room – edged with mosses and grass – the mirror of Venus. …. (Richardson's ellipses and dashes, 63-4).

It is useful to dwell on Richardson further, both because of the influence her work had on subsequent modernist writers, and because critical responses to her novels which closely predate the publication of *Whose Body?* (1923) are illustrative of contemporary discussions of intelligence, subjectivity and consciousness in the modernist novel. Firstly, the 'intelligence' of Miriam is of the synthetic kind discussed by Hanscombe: Miriam's is a highly absorptive consciousness, passively receiving fragments of reality, being drawn to shapes and colours which take on an oblique, almost symbolic significance and which are connected in mysterious ways to other impressions, memories, and ideas. 'Anything that goes into her mind she can summon forth again, and there it is, complete in every detail' remarks Katherine Mansfield in a contemporary review of Richardson's novels (309). In 1919, Woolf described how the reader is invited 'to follow these impressions as they flicker through Miriam's mind, waking incongruously other thoughts, and plaiting incessantly the many-coloured and innumerable threads of life' ("Dorothy Richardson" 189). Present impressions and memory are being constantly plaited and fused, the present is as one with the past. Furthermore, when memory is recalled, it is of a highly subjective colour:

> She adds an element to her perception of things which has not been noticed before, or if noticed, has been guiltily suppressed. A man might fall dead at her feet (it is unlikely), and Miriam may feel that a violet-coloured light was an important element in her consciousness of the tragedy. (ibid. 192)

The idea that an element of perception has either not been noticed or has been suppressed is consistent with Woolf's view of the realist novel as insufficiently realistic: preoccupied with recording the material circumstances of characters, the realist novel strives for an objective view that is inconsistent with anyone's actual experience of the world. In a 1918 review, May Sinclair concurs. She notes how Richardson's characters 'are presented to us in the same vivid but fragmentary way in which they appeared to

Miriam, the fragmentary way in which people appear to most of us' ("The Novels of Dorothy Richardson" 443). A scene is always a scene as remembered by someone, details such as the quality of a coloured light are not mere ephemera, and the recollection of scenes in a fragmented, highly subjective way is not necessarily unreliable. As the 'truth' of an event is always mediated by characters, the possibility of an objective account is nullified.

Trust is what is at stake, and as Sinclair suggests, Richardson's fragmentary and highly subjective prose is not wilfully disruptive: it gets 'closer to reality than any of our other novelists' ("The Novels of Dorothy Richardson" 444). Woolf saw Richardson's verisimilitude extending further, so that the form of the sentence itself was shaped to portray more accurately the ways in which consciousness receives and processes sense experience: Richardson 'has fashioned her sentence consciously,' Woolf states, 'in order that it may descend to the depths and investigate the crannies of Miriam Henderson's consciousness' ("Dorothy Richardson" 191). Like her contemporary pioneer of interiority, James Joyce, Richardson was an influence on Woolf, who used interior monologue and a score of other techniques to achieve the impressionistic prose which she believed came closest to the truth of life:

> Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they sharpen themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there … Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. ("Modern Fiction" 189-190)

The modernist novel as Woolf outlines it celebrates subjective responses to a world which – through such a gaze – revealed itself to be anything but objective, consistent and rationally verifiable. Of course, experience was seen not as merely the immediate

experience of perception, of 'atoms falling', but the amalgamation of this 'incessant shower' with the already constituted identity: the memories, instincts and inclinations embedded in the unconscious. This is something Richardson tends towards, but to her fellow modernists, she did not dig deep enough. When Woolf criticises Richardson, it is for her tendency to treat Miriam's mind as 'a very vivid surface' which impressions 'glance off' ("Dorothy Richardson" 190), rather than as a site of creative synthesis. Mansfield calls Richardson's novels 'dragonflies' (310), as a comment upon this flitting quality. Not only the place where memory was recorded, the unconscious was seen as the place where mysterious connections were made between phenomena, often out of the reach of consciousness. More would be generated by Woolf's characters, less passively received, and more interaction between memory and the present would achieve more authentic realism and depth as patterns developed in the interaction between the exterior world and the modern subject.

Case Studies

Does detective fiction, a genre preoccupied with probing the impressions of its suspects and witnesses and with shaping them into a pattern, exhibit any of the modernist preference for recording the minutia of consciousness? The much-used trope of the unreliable witness – confusing dates and times, imputing fantastical motivations onto other characters and subconsciously connecting impressions to come to a false conclusion is common in golden age crime fiction. Familiar too is the character who remembers a trivial detail because it has called to mind a distant memory, or for some other highly subjective reason made a peculiarly profound impression upon them. These devices superficially acknowledge the understandings of consciousness which preoccupied modernist writers, without occasioning any particular innovations in the form. Dorothy L. Sayers in *Whose Body?* (1923) and Margery Allingham in *Traitor's Purse* (1941) went further than their contemporary crime writers; by adopting comparable techniques for recording consciousness as Richardson and Woolf, they validate impressionistic encounters with the world, and demonstrate how the modernist

novel supplied a pattern for crime writers seeking to give new shape to their form. The assertion that impressions can form the basis of knowledge and that irrational inclinations and emotions are as valid a spur for action as reason, countered the genre-defining rationalism of the detective story.

As critical responses to Richardson's work show, her form of writing was not admired merely for its artistic merit,[17] but also for its unique truthfulness to life. Finding an elusive truth is a central concern in detective writing, and one of the most striking ways in which these texts learn from modernism is in their location of that truth not in an external, objective reality, but in the depths of the detective's mind. Trusting to emotion and intuition, their detectives are dependent upon aspects of mind ungovernable by, and possibly unknowable to, the reasoning mind.

Margery Allingham, *Traitor's Purse* (1941)

Traitor's Purse represents a new brand of detective fiction penned by golden age authors during the Second World War in response to the perception that Nazism was penetrating the inner sanctums of British public and private life. It is a highly patriotic novel, depicting a generation maturing into roles of responsibility as the ideological and material defenders of their social order. Humility is central to the novel, and in the case of Allingham's detective Albert Campion, it is achieved through the dismantling of the traditional detective figure. Appearing in 1929, Campion is one of the classic golden age detectives, defined by piercing intelligence, aristocratic birth and privileged social position. In mysteries published up to 1938, he demonstrates his peerless detective qualities through his logical method, decisive action, physical prowess and the respect he commands from both figures of authority and the criminal underworld. That is why, in *Traitor's Purse*, Campion has been entrusted with a secret mission to halt a plan concocted by the Nazis to release false bank notes, which would undermine the strength of Britain's economy and British self-confidence: 'At this moment Britain depends

[17] On the contrary, Mansfield and Woolf are critical of aspects of Richardson's work in their reviews. (see Mansfield 310; Woolf, "Dorothy Richardson" 190)

practically entirely on her faith in herself and her own internal stability. If that could be destroyed suddenly, by a single stroke, there would come confusion, exhaustion, and finally decay' (163). The detective is the antidote to such paranoia, a solitary figure buoyed with self-confidence, able to distinguish between truth and falsehood and respond with reason and clear-headedness to confusion and panic.

However, in the opening pages of *Traitor's Purse*, Campion wakes up in a hospital bed suffering from amnesia. The political situation, the details of the conspiracy and his own identity are a mystery to him. He has no immediate access to those attributes which constitute him as the detective – the capacity for infallible reasoning, intellectual certainty, composite knowledge and decisive action. His ego as Campion is lost, and he becomes a consciousness without an identity, a feeling entity rather than a knowing and reasoning one. He initially flounders, and the novel charts his increasing disenchantment with the role of rational detective and his reliance upon his instincts, profound emotional attachments, and sudden flashes of inspiration. Subconscious inclinations are shown to be more reliable than reasoned thought, and he must rely upon them and his own somewhat mysterious capacity to make connections that are not purely logical, in order to avert the conspiracy. The states through which he passes, through ignorance and self-disgust, to self-recognition and ultimately to a revitalised and integrated selfhood, act as both an accompaniment to, and the real site of, the transformation of Britain as becoming-nation.

When Campion wakes up, he has no memories. He obtains consciousness, but has had his 'previous life wiped clean off the slate of [his] own mind' (134). He has some sense of stability in the knowledge of the basic structure of reality – what hospitals, policemen and cars are – but lacks more involved knowledge of his social role and the political situation. Not even knowing his own name, he is mere consciousness, acting 'like a man living in that minute' (106) only. As he awakes, he overhears a policeman describing how the patient (Campion) committed murder before he lost consciousness. The world confronts him as sinister and unknowable, and this anxiety is revealed in social situations in which the subtle interplay of meaning communicated

through glances, tone and suggestive speech is lost to him. More alarmingly, judging the reliability of others is dangerous and uncertain business, and a succession of characters elicit his trust before being revealed as quite different to how he initially perceived them: his realisation that the helpful and sympathetic character Amanda is not his wife makes him feel intense loneliness and instability. The sinister Mr Pyne is a source of comfort when Campion believes him to be an old friend, but a moment of profound estrangement occurs when he finds he has only known him for a couple of days. To Campion, it feels like 'one of those trick films wherein familiar objects are photographed from an unfamiliar angle. The strange shadows thus cast made vast secret shapes, forming a horror where there is none and, worse still, concealing a horror where horror lies' (59).

Campion's disconcerting experiences throw the anxieties of subjectivity into sharp relief, awakening him to the weakness of the individual perspective, something rarely experienced by the omniscient detective figure. Unable to find the right angle from which to view events, Campion's uncertainty stylises the misapprehensions of characters in the detective novel, as well as those of the reader who, as Holquist suggests, turn away from modernist literature confused by its multiple perspectives and to the detective novel for its methodological certainties and its guaranteed, final, complete interpretation. As such, the facts of the case evade Campion, and his attempts to discover the meaning behind events resemble the uncertainties of the reader of the mystery. A clue is pointed out to him by another character, but he looks at it with the eyes of a layman, spotting nothing out of the ordinary:

> "Interesting?" He murmured to Campion, and there was just a shade more than the ordinary casual question in the remark.
>
> Campion looked at the gate pillar and saw nothing. (46)

The order underlying the mystery and the secret truths bound up in mundane clues seem to be around him at all times, but because they do not connect, the truth is inaccessible: 'It was all there in his hand. He held it without knowing what it was. In his blindness he had discovered his objective. In his miserable ignorance he could not identify it' (167).

Like the reader, he yearns for the return of the detective, but does not associate this figure's unifying, rationalising functions with himself.

The detective has an affinity with an objective worldview, but amnesia, as Allingham represents it, limits Campion's capacity to connect knowledge recalled emotionally with a reasonable explanation. The impressions he receives and the feelings they inspire are recorded in particularly intimate ways for the detective novel:

> it was with relief that he saw a pair of darkened sidelights swaying down the road towards him. They turned out to belong to a bus. … The sight jolted him and for an instant recollection rushed at him in a great warm sweep of bright colours, only to recede again, leaving him desperate. (14)

In spite of the 'warm' feeling, he is unable to fasten his impressions together into any coherent shape. Rational explanations are concealed behind the 'curtain of darkness which hung between the front and the back part of his mind' (28). Slight returns of painful memories, habitual actions, strong emotions and sudden flashes of insight are all that manage to cross the curtain of darkness. This emphasises the affective and instinctual character of the unconscious and the consciousness's reliance upon the emotional and the irrational for a completely integrated identity. Effusive responses are welcomed with gratitude, including superstition (65), a sixth sense (113) and 'primitive and disturbing' anger, each of which guide him in recognising danger and enemies (115). '[R]emembering something not mentally but emotionally' (115) is put forth as a valid foundation for knowledge and judgement, rather than a logical, cognitive process. In similar fashion, the impulsive need he feels towards Amanda, 'unreasonable and unanswerable' (52) is treated as a bedrock upon which to form his moral character and motivations in his new, disorientated existence. The detached and logical detective is no longer possible. As Campion must rely on Amanda and his profound love for her, so must he place his faith in irrational and affective processes he is unable to master or control.

From the novel's opening, Campion is guided by automatic action. 'Moved by indignation and an odd singleness of purpose' (9) he makes a dramatic escape from the

hospital. In the ensuing chase, Campion acts in a state which will be compared with hypnosis, automatism and somnambulism – the confused impulsion of 'that mysterious body-mind' (89) that leads one through a nightmare. His actions are chaotic, his occasional capacity for decisive action is sinister to himself. Picking a lock and stealing a car seem effortless, while a remarkable skill in physical self-defence and the ability to climb 'like a cat' (140) force him to ask, what kind of a man would have such abilities? The muscle memory of the body and the unconscious mind's collaboration in accomplishing these habitual and instinctive actions are treated as clues to self-identity, but highly disconcerting ones. Most alarming is the clear vision which appears, fully formed in his mind, when he views the body of a man who may have been murdered:

> Ever since he had first seen the body he had felt less lost and more sure of himself, as if the dark curtain across his brain were already practically transparent, and now it had come to him up out of the shadows, but with all the conviction of certain knowledge, that he knew perfectly well how the man had been killed and what the weapon was that had murdered him. He did not attempt to argue with himself. He simply knew. (48-9)

This clear vision, and the more detailed description of the death which follows, grants the reader a rare moment of access to the mind and thought process of the detective. As shall be seen, it corresponds to Peter Wimsey's moment of unconscious detection in *Whose Body?* in suggesting that the source of the detective's powers and insight is not exclusively rational, but rather a process of synthesis unconsciously achieved. In its immediate context, however, Campion treats the surprising insight as a troubling clue into his psyche, which forces him to question whether he has committed the murder himself. In a section which calls to mind the dreamlike reminiscences of Pen in Brand's *Head You Lose* (see chapter 4), Campion considers admitting the disabling state of his mind and handing himself to the authorities. However, he is driven on by the burning sense that he has a task to accomplish. Self-doubt is tempered, as it is throughout the novel, by his inexplicable sense of conviction. While characters like Agatha Christie's Cust in *The ABC Murders* turn to the detective for personal reassurance, Campion still

possesses an iota of self-belief, although it is of the emotional, passionate kind, rather than the perfectly rational.

Whether or not the new Campion is capable of becoming a self-assured detective, and whether in fact such a figure is desirable, is an uncertainty that is kept unresolved for the best part of the novel. He continues to doubt whether to trust himself and his own instincts and makes bad choices as often as good. He is persistently troubled by the mystery of his character and emotional nature, whose shape is left impressed upon his friends and colleagues. The inferences he is able to draw are not altogether pleasing. When he realises that other characters look to him to avert the plot and 'save the day' he is disgusted by the dependence that he must have previously encouraged: 'A fine chuckleheaded ass he must have been to surround himself with dear, faithful followers incapable of independent thought; fawners, seekers after orders' (122). The allusion to the dependence upon authority encouraged in fascist states is unmistakable, and it is therefore significant that separation from his regular identity enables him to recognise how the personal authority of the detective shares the character and assumptions of a greater political evil. Likewise, his realisation that Amanda is not his wife, but has been his fiancé for eight years, and that his procrastination caused her to break the engagement, causes him to reflect with grief: 'If he was a half-wit now, he seemed to have been a lunatic for some considerable time' (31).

Estrangement enables him to confront his identity and the detective role in a critical way, which in turn enables him to refashion himself. This includes the recognition of Amanda's extraordinary intelligence, insight, and independence. Reunification with his 'true' self becomes less desirable, and Campion rejects the arrogant independence of his past: 'Pride, manners, custom, the habit of a lifetime, and training of an ancient system be damned' (36), he thinks, as they lead him to fail to appreciate Amanda and to resist his 'helplessness and his need for her' (206). At these moments, he 'struggled up and out of a whole customary system of living and emerged a small naked essence of the basic man' (36). Values affirmed by subjective experience, rather than those imposed upon him from without as an objective good – such as his

socially condoned, masculine need not to rely on Amanda – are finally perceived as foundational for authentic experience and personal autonomy.

Throughout the novel, the lost, original 'Campion' has been imagined in many guises by the disengaged consciousness of the protagonist. The return of memory and identity has been hoped for, but once the new Campion realises that his identity is undergoing significant changes, he begins to hope his old self never returns. However, when he receives another head injury, he is jolted back. Albert Campion, the assertive and clear-headed golden age hero makes his first appearance more than half-way through the novel, and the entire adventure so far is sealed off from his memory. To the reader, who has accompanied the surrogate Campion on his profound process of re-fashioning, the original Campion's return is disappointing, his character appearing superficial and arrogant. He seems a much younger man, the 'fine chuckleheaded ass' that the new Campion came to despise. His cocksure tone and blithe self-assurance jar with the more thoughtful, uncertain and vulnerable man to whom the reader has become accustomed. The missing details of the plot are mundanely explained (the returned Campion remembers them all, except for what has taken place between his concussion and his return) and the reader's emotional investment in the mystery shifts from superficial interest in the facts to a concern with whether the two Campions will reunite and reconstitute one another.

To emphasise the shift from the amnesiac, emotional self to the fully conscious rational one, now that Campion has the facts to hand, the emotional insight gained in the intervening hours tugs at him from his concealed self in the same way as the plot details used to: 'He might have had some deep emotional experience rather than a bang on the head' (172) he reflects. He attempts to reconstitute events by probing witnesses and pondering clues, however it is in a moment of involuntary emotional outpouring – brought about by the sight of Amanda – that the breakthrough occurs:

> He was seeing her through some sort of mental curtain. His subconscious mind reached out for this infuriating barrier and drew it slowly aside like a wet page.

> The complete picture lay before him.
>
> He saw it all in a single dreadful moment of revelation. The whole kaleidoscope history of the last thirty-six hours, painted with pitiless clarity and minute detail, unfolded before him in all its stark gravity; a mad, uncomic strip with himself wandering blindfold through it all like a lost soul. Then, as his two minds and personalities merged at last, as the new Campion's witless discoveries fitted over the old Campion's certain knowledge, the three-dimensional truth suddenly sprang out in blazing colours. He stood petrified. (180)

The division between the two Campions – the original with his 'certain knowledge' and the amnesiac with his 'witless discoveries' – is overcome. The subconscious mind, which 'reaches out' and reveals the truth, is both part of, and independent to, the conscious witnessing Campion. Their merging permits a composite view inaccessible to either alone. In both iterations, 'Campion' has been constituted as a subject largely inaccessible to himself. His experiences as a lost soul have been recorded with 'pitiless clarity and minute detail' in the subconscious mind, but it is only through his profound emotional attachment to Amanda and all that she embodies that the two minds are reunited.

In terms of the political content of the novel and its patriotic message, the resolution suggests that a degree of overcoming of both individual reason and the self is necessary for an ethical and impassioned politics. While absolute intellectual dependence, of the kind exhibited by other characters towards the detective figure, is portrayed as on a continuum with the mass displays of sycophantic indoctrination witnessed on the Continent, individualism is seen to be best tempered by commitment to the social body. In his amnesiac state, Campion is forced to accept his dependence on Amanda and dismantle the self-assurance and wilful isolation that has characterised his practice as a detective: 'his self-confidence had received a dangerous blow' (180) he realises upon waking, and this is undoubtedly a good thing. Unlike the villain of the piece, a ruthlessly rational academic and political fanatic whose 'mistaken belief in his

own superiority cut him off from reality as completely as if he were living in a glass jar' (205), the detective figure is reconstructed on the grounds of a socially responsible and integrated humility, recognising his implication in the social body and inspired by an emotional creed embedded in communally held values. For this reason Amanda, an embodiment of Campion's newly discovered patriotism, is praised for her practicality, common sense, sanity, generosity, and very British 'pluck'. She is 'a right thing in a ghastly, unrealistic world' and evokes the familiar: 'all the lovely machinery for living, like manners and introductions and calling-cards and giving up one's seat on the bus' (125). When Campion becomes resolved to avert the plot, he does so because of a passionate yearning to protect his nation and Amanda, rather than the thrill of intellectual stimulation that typified him in his earlier incarnation as heroic, problem solving detective.

Dorothy L. Sayers, *Whose Body?* (1923)

Published two years before *Mrs Dalloway, Whose Body?* gives expression to the disordered consciousness and mental turmoil experienced by her shell-shocked detective. Pitted against his own Professor Moriarty, Wimsey justifies his name in his carefree, amateurish approach to detection. However, both his mental condition and his fanciful patterns of thought are treated as weapons in a confrontation which extends beyond the solution to the crime. Unlike Holmes, who shared the reasoning faculties of Moriarty but not his amorality, Wimsey and his adversary are epistemologically opposed, as each promotes alternative and irreconcilable systems of knowledge from which their moral outlooks are derived. In the task of dismantling the irrational rationality of the killer and celebrating the idiosyncratic, heterogeneous methods advanced by Wimsey, the novel employs an assortment of narrative modes traceable to modernist fiction. Experiments with new ways of seeing and recording reality pioneered in the modernist novel, and the introduction of the subjective, impressionistic stance is integral to the detective work done by Wimsey, and to the novel's animating debate between reason and unreason. The unconscious emerges as an ulterior realm in which an

activity resembling detection can take place, while the subjective view, in passages which display stylistic resemblances with modernist writing, affords a way – perhaps the only way – to gain valid knowledge about the world.

The Murderer

The eminent neurologist Sir Julian Freke represents the rational point of view. Freke has spent his illustrious career enquiring into *The Physiological Basis of Consciousness* (the title of his recent book) and writing virulent ripostes to Freud and his disciples in the British psychoanalytic school (131). A chilling item in his *Who's Who* entry refers to the experiments he carried out on shell-shock victims in 1919 (131) which, in contrast to the more emotion-aware talking cures pioneered by W. H. R Rivers, are likely to have resembled techniques used by the majority of contemporary physicians: chloroform hypnosis (see W. Milligan 242; E.T.C. Milligan 73), the introduction of a spatula to the larynx (see Yealland 3) and either the threat of, or the actual administering of, electric currents to the brain and neck (Garton 585; Yealland 11). As well as resembling the dominant school of neurologists whose response to shell-shock was aggressive and disciplinary, Freke is also the country's most distinguished representative of criminological positivism. He believes criminality is an innate trait defined by diagnosable pathologies, and that all morals and emotional life – including 'hysteria, crime, religion, fear, shyness, conscience' – have a material foundation open to observation (131). A glaring clue early on in the novel that Freke is the villain is the fact that these scientific enquiries have led him to reason away morality as a symptom of a mechanical irritation – a development from the Enlightenment premise of faith as unscientific superstition. Freke advances his thesis further in print. Knowledge of good and evil, he states, 'is an observable phenomenon, attendant upon certain conditions of the brain cells, which is removable' (129). Conscience is atavistic, an evidence of a less sophisticated stage of evolution which is often an obstacle to the individual's survival. As Wimsey realises, Freke's science is 'an ideal doctrine for a criminal' (129).

It is therefore significant that Freke aligns himself with the classic detective by comparing the value both place upon observation. Freke says to Inspector Parker, 'just as you observe a theft or a murder and look for the footsteps of the criminal, so I observe a fit of hysterics or an outburst of piety and hunt for the little mechanical irritation which has produced it' (108). The detective as Freke conceives him is an observer, and like the scientist his elevation above his object of enquiry enables him to view human beings as units of data. In his practice of observation and his adoption of the forms of reasoning – the same techniques pioneered by Holmes – Freke demonstrates how the detective's reductive, scientific stance transitions into the criminal's immoral calculations. In *Whose Body?,* Freke is compared to both Holmes and his equally intelligent adversary, Professor Moriarty. Mentally, both function in an identical way, but, while the detective is preoccupied with upholding the *status quo*, the criminal has other ideas. Freke's comparison with the two picks up on a concern that is central even to the Holmes stories – that there is something dangerous about Holmes' outlook. Positivism, applied to human relations, may solve crimes, but it poses a real threat which is brought to life in the figure of Moriarty.

The realisation of this concern in *Whose Body?* will not be clear until Wimsey's role is discussed (more on that later). Firstly though, it is necessary to enquire further into the portrayal of Freke, who embodies the tendency, observed by Mandel, for rationality to transition into irrationality. As Sayers makes clear, Freke's system of modelling is flawed. Piety, hysteria, crime, shyness, conscience, and religion, which he states are all symptoms of nervous pathology traceable to a mechanic irritation, are categorically distinct and irreducible facets of human experience. By reducing them into equivalents he demonstrates how his scientific modelling rejects all qualities and depth as excess. His models as such do not represent life in its intensity, complexity and nuance. Religion, the central philosophy of Sayers' own life,[18] is a victim of Freke's

18 Sayers' writings on a Christian theme include *The Mind of the Maker* (1941), *Catholic Tales and Christian Songs* (1918) and *The Man Born to Be King* (1941), while her humanism is evident in the public address she gave in 1938, later published as *Are Women Human?*(2005).

gross underestimation: ‘Thinks God’s a secretion of the liver’ (71) mocks Wimsey, in one of the novel’s characteristic responses to Freke’s worldview as fatally insufficient.

Sayers does not question the legitimacy of science or philosophical logic so much as their capacity to explain certain phenomena: religion and morality certainly, but also human psychology and the social relations which lead to crime. Finding a footprint and linking it with a suspect does not solve the mystery, as any reader of good detective stories knows. In relation to psychology, Freke’s reductive worldview is shown as inadequate when he attempts a diagnosis of Wimsey. Before Wimsey unmasks him as the killer, he visits Freke at his medical practice, ostensibly to ask the eminent neurologist’s advice about a resurgence of war trauma that Wimsey has (genuinely) just suffered. The balance of power in this scene is complex, not only because of their respective roles as detective and criminal, but because of the very recent history of brutal psychiatric treatment of shell-shock victims like Wimsey in which Freke is implicated. Asking Wimsey to relate his experiences of the episode, the sounds, emotions, and visions that overcame him, Freke translates this rich emotional material into the matter-of-fact language of nerve-sensations and tissue damage, the ‘physical changes which you will call by the names you were accustomed to associate with them – dread of German mines, responsibility for your men, strained attention’ as well as horror and fear (169). His explanation accounts for everything while explaining nothing. Responding to the quantity of the sufferer’s symptoms, but not their quality, Freke is insensitive to the meaning of psychological events in the lived experience of the patient.

Reducing all that rich psychological content into nervous ‘changes we are only beginning to be able to detect, even with our most delicate instruments’ (169), Freke’s medical practice fails in its objective to cure patients. His eyes ‘were not the cool and kindly eyes of the family doctor, they were the brooding eyes of the inspired scientist, and they searched one through’ (166). Just as he is indifferent to unquantifiable but remedial factors such as a caring bedside manner, Freke excludes much that is considered unscientific from his diagnosis of Wimsey, ignoring the fact that meaning

and emotional reality are inseparable from Wimsey's experience and must be factored into his cure.

In his diagnosis, Freke executes interpretive violence upon Wimsey which he attempts to match with physical violence – the injection of a 'prescription' to alleviate Wimsey's symptoms, which is actually a poison intended to quiet the detective. His objective, scientific diagnosis masks a dangerous subtext, but as in all of his villainous acts, Freke is acting purely rationally. Following his means-end rationale, getting rid of Wimsey is necessary in order to achieve his ends. Superficial phenomena like conscience do not delimit his actions. '[H]e thinks conscience is a sort of vermiform appendix' remarks Wimsey. 'Chop it out and you'll feel all the better' (159). Although Freke has not physically 'chopped it out', he has disregarded morality and so responds impassively to any motions of conscience he might experience in experimenting upon his victims. However, the text seems to state that the rational, scientific outlook as represented by Freke does not achieve its own objectives because it is rarely employed objectively. 'There's nothing you can't prove if your outlook is only sufficiently limited' (71) says Wimsey, contributing to the novel's overall assertion that the scientific view, taken to its logical conclusion, ends in fanaticism. Freke is not merely a methodical, impassive, objective scientist: as his monographs show, his 'attacks on his antagonists are savage' (158). When confronted with a problem, his face appears 'impassioned and inhuman' (166).

In a letter Freke writes to Wimsey explaining his crime, the scientist himself acknowledges the irrational motivations and antagonistic desires which are at the kernel of his rationality:

> my original sensual impulse to kill Sir Reuben Levy had already become profoundly modified by my habits of thought. To the animal lust to slay and the primitive human desire for revenge, there was added the rational intention of substituting my own theories for the satisfaction of myself and the world. (182)

Freke's rational intention, he openly admits, is built upon the original sensual impulses, meaning the nervous channels, as described by William James, have become calcified

through frequent use (107). Despite having undergone modification, as Freke believes they have, the sensual foundation of the impulse underlies the rational objective that has been built on top, and only the most introspective scientific practitioner, or the most remorseless in Freke's case, will claim to be able to distinguish the emotional-immoral from the scientific-objective intention. The theory Freke was testing, that 'a perfectly sane man, not intimidated by religious or other delusions, could always render himself perfectly secure from detection' (182) is both vicious and insane. At the same time, it is a perfectly valid problem for scientific enquiry. There is no way out of this dilemma from within Freke's thought system. Because his brand of rationality reduces conscience, morality and religion to side-effects of physical processes, they cannot be used as alternate and valid sources of value by which to oppose his murderous experiment.

The Detective

Freke the scientist resembles both Holmes and Moriarty, and for this reason Peter Wimsey is proposed as an antidote to both. He is reliant on methods which confront Freke's scientific outlook and his destructive egotism, and contribute to the opposition between the rational and the irrational established throughout the novel. Wimsey recognises the value of absurdity. He is happy to exploit his harmless, daft, and foppish appearance in order to scrutinise suspects without raising suspicion, but absurdity is not merely a mask for a brilliant intellect. It is an ingredient in that intellect that is essential to Wimsey's detection. For example, Wimsey interweaves his more perceptive 'detective-speeches' with a range of comical and absurd exclamations, including nursery rhymes, jokes and puns, tangential anecdotes and improvised doggerel. He refers to this tendency as 'the sacred duty of flippancy' (59) and, even though some speeches are spoken straight (158-9), his light-hearted tone inflects many conversations that might have inspired gravity in other literary detectives. Rather than being a distraction, his freewheeling verbosity is ultimately creative. There is no mention of Jung's work on

psychological type,[19] but it is in the context of a public reciprocity to ideas about different forms of intelligence and patterns of thought that Wimsey's method is formed. Rather than abstract reasoning, he exhibits the form of intelligence which, as Hanscombe states, was admired by Dorothy Richardson and expressed in her character Miriam – 'the ability to perceive relationships between phenomena and the effort to synthesize feeling and reflection' (Hanscombe 6). His rapid, charming, and eclectic style of conversation, in which diverse scraps of song, stories, and ideas are seized upon and blended into the flow, is never purely random. In the associations he so rapidly makes in his speech, he reveals the same manner of thinking as he employs in detection.

When Wimsey discusses detection, he claims that the ability to synthesise details and associate diverse material is vital. '[I]t's only in Sherlock Holmes and stories like that that people think things out logically,' he states. 'O'nar'ly, if somebody tells you somethin' out of the way, you just say, "By Jove!" or "How sad!" an' leave it at that, an' half the time you forget about it, 'nless somethin' turns up afterwards to drive it home' (118). His thinking, like most people's, is associative, and when a fact has 'started an association in [the] mind' (119), most people are able to re-join those details and remember a number of details that they would otherwise have forgotten. Wimsey demonstrates a similar point in an interview with a witness. A slightly drunk medical student is wagered that he can remember what he was doing on one day a week previously. Although he claims this is impossible, Wimsey suggests to him multiple ways of recalling the details. 'Do you keep a notebook of the work you do when you dissect? … Turn back the pages of your drawing book in your mind' (150) he suggests. Nudging the witness to remember the colour, shape, place on the page, and organisation of the drawings, as well as the feel and look of the body he was dissecting and the

19 First published in Switzerland in 1921, the English translation was not published until 1923, the same year as *Whose Body?* Sayers may have encountered Jung's psychological categories via numerous other channels: essays outlining the theory of types were first published in English in 1916 (*Psychological Types*). Sayers spoke and read German – in her letters she mentions German coaching and examinations (Letter to her parents; Letter to Catherine Godfrey) – so she might have encountered Jung's work in its original language. Either way, discussions of these ideas formed part of her college life: in *Gaudy Night* Harriet Vane comments that the 'fashion for psychological analysis' (159) dominated her years at Oxford University.

sounds of the laboratory, Wimsey encourages the witness to unearth highly detailed memories. These facts could never have been recalled if he had been asked specific questions about details of the day, but Wimsey's associative method, attentive to the full sensory experience of memory, helps draw the details out. The student, who admits to a poor record at examinations because his head is 'like a sieve,' is astonished to realise he has 'an extra good memory' when he is given something 'to catch hold of' (154).

When Wimsey attempts more logical methods of thinking, it quickly descends into absurdity. Using a method of logical thinking which Wimsey claims was developed at Oxford University and 'strongly advocated by my distinguished colleague Professor Snupshed' (77) Wimsey analyses the possible guilt of the suspect, Crimplesham. He isolates three possible explanations of Crimplesham's involvement: 'we will now examine severally the various suggestions afforded by Possibility No.2. This possibility may again be sub-divided into two or more Hypotheses' (77). He goes on in this mocking register, translating the details of the case into generic philosophical logic and making recommendations for investigation based on his calculations. The hypothetical result is not a useful development in solving the mystery, but a stiffening of the possibilities of the detective novel. Every line of enquiry Wimsey logically follows leads to a formulaic solution. In one scenario, Crimplesham is 'in the words of the English classic, a man-of-infinite-resource-and-sagacity' (78); he 'will produce witnesses to prove that he left Victoria at 5.45 and emerged from Balham at the scheduled time, and sat up all Monday night playing chess with a respectable gentleman' (78). In none of the hypothetical lines of logical enquiry does Wimsey come close to the real explanation for Crimplesham's involvement, which is quickly revealed in an informal interview. Logical and abstract thought gets Wimsey no closer to the truth of the mystery; instead, it takes him further away from life, a process of ossification which is compared to the stagy, conventional formulas of the worst crime novel.

Self-referentiality is one of the defining features of golden age crime fiction. In moments of collusion with the reader, authors frequently defined their novels against the stories of Conan Doyle, or hypothetical, second-rate and formulaic contemporary pot-

boilers. You are not reading one of *those* sorts of books, golden age crime novels seem to say. Accordingly, *Whose Body?* is replete with comments, generally voiced by characters rather than the narrator, which remind the reader that they are reading about real life, not the simplified universe of the detective novel. Characters remind one another that extraordinary motivations are actually found in ordinary life, even though they may be expunged from crime novels. These motivations are evidence of the complex psychologies of real people, which the simplified mystery generally ignores. Through these theories, golden age crime writers reformed their genre in a comparable manner to that of Woolf, writing in "Modern Fiction" of the need to reflect upon spirit, not matter, in the modern novel. In *Whose Body?* a self-conscious departure from the old conventions of the detective story into the more psychologically rich terrain simultaneously being explored by the modernist novel can be seen in the episode in which Wimsey solves the crime. That this moment also is the accomplishment of the movement away from rational detection and the apex of the irrational method, demonstrates that something as innovative as modernism in fiction is here being accomplished in the mystery form.

Wimsey begins the scene 'extraordinarily wakeful and alert' with a feeling like something 'was jigging and worrying in his brain' (125). He settles down, pipe in mouth, for a spot of deductive pondering, '[tracing] out this line and that line of investigation' (125). Just as he could not explain nor control the feeling of wakefulness, he is powerless when his thoughts begin to deviate from the concrete details of the case:

> They ran back from the picture of the grotesque dead man in Mr Thipp's bathroom – they ran over the roof, and were lost – lost in the sand. Rivers running into the sand – rivers running underground, very far down -
>
> *Where Alph, the sacred river, ran*
> *Through caverns measureless to man*
> *Down to a sunless sea.* (127-8)

Despite his active attempt to pursue linear logic, his lines of enquiry fracture and descend into the stream of consciousness. The excerpt from Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"

refers to the direction of Wimsey's thought – into unconscious territory – in its contents as the same time as it presents material lifted from the unconscious by Wimsey in a moment of free association. By no means a distraction, the inclusion of Romantic verse suggests that Wimsey's mind is at its most limber, as associations and memories buried in his unconscious mind are being stirred up. External stimuli – a book and a photograph – encourage further ideas, and he begins to feel that there is something important that he has forgotten. It does not come at once, however: he tries to pursue an 'elusive memory for some minutes, till it vanished altogether with a mocking flick of the tail' (128). The memory he needs cannot be forced, and he is once again powerless. That is not to say he is inactive: what he is trying to achieve is a state of receptive inactivity, where he ceases to block subconscious thoughts. Eventually,

> it happened – the thing he had been half-consciously expecting. It happened suddenly, surely, as unmistakably as sunrise. He remembered – not one thing, not another thing, nor a logical succession of things, but everything – the whole thing, perfect, complete, in all its dimensions as it were and instantaneously; as if he stood outside and saw it suspended in infinitely dimensional space. He no longer needed to reason about it, or even to think about it. He knew it. (129)

The "Kubla Khan" quotation introduces the notion of space that is measureless, and this is reiterated above, as Wimsey regards the solution as if it were 'suspended in infinitely dimensional space'. Scientific methods of measurement cannot grapple with the mind or products of thought, they are undetectable and immeasurable, despite Freke's assertion that he is 'beginning to be able to detect' minute changes in consciousness 'with our most delicate instruments' (169). No scientific method or logical process could have resolved all the case's baffling details and created something so perfect and whole. The 'scattered elements … flung higgledy piggledy' (130) could not have been arranged into a meaningful order through careful analysis. Attempts at analytical thought – the breaking down of the case into its details – suggest only a jumbled and inaccurate melding of details together, much like the false solution that Wimsey's rival, Inspector

Suggs, comes to by forcing the facts of the case into a logical, but nonsensical, order. Sayers compares it to a game in which one must reorder a sequence of jumbled letters to find the hidden word. The example given is COSSSSRI. 'The slow way of solving the problem is to try out all the permutations and combinations in turn … as: SSSIRC or SCSRSO' (129). This laborious, experimental method leads to a solution, but a more intuitive approach, which utilises faculties over which the observer has limited control, is often more suited to the task: 'Another way is to stare at the inco-ordinate elements until, by no logical process that the conscious mind can detect, or under some adventitious external stimulus, the combination SCISSORS presents itself with calm certainty' (130). Although Sayers is no devotee of Freud,[20] the unconscious as it was sensed by the Romantic poetics, sounded out by William James and ultimately announced by Freud, is the focus here. The synthesis of details, which Wimsey knows to be true even before he has accumulated any evidence, takes place unconsciously.

In order to emphasise the role of the unconscious, and to suggest how it might work, immediately after the moment of discovery Wimsey has a full hysteric attack replete with psychoanalytic overtones. A shameful memory of childhood suddenly overcomes him and he relives the sounds, sensations. and emotions of the moment. Noises from the outside world – a log cracking, a lorry in the street – are absorbed into the fantasy and Wimsey's butler awakes to find his master is now reliving a terrifying experience of trench warfare: 'I can't hear anything for the noise of the guns. Can't they stop the guns?' (132). In the cases of Dr Lockhart and Christianna Brand's killer, Pen (see chapter 4), this state of mind was understood as dissociation. Although Wimsey's attack takes place after he has made a grand *association*, like Lockhart, Wimsey then suffers 'from dissociation between the higher and the lower levels of the brain' ("Doctor Guilty, But Insane"), wherein the conscious mind loses autonomy and the 'lower' levels of the unconscious and of memory seize control. The metaphor of the unconscious as depth has already been evoked – 'running underground, very far down' (127) in the

20 As can be seen in *Gaudy Night* (1931), which contains considerable criticism of Freud's theory of sexuality and its popular adoption.

caverns of the Khan. It is clear that the unconscious activity which has enabled Wimsey to solve the crime has triggered other unconscious content, and lead to the attack.

Sayers' employment of the unconscious in detection does more than differentiate Wimsey from his literary predecessors; it amounts to a more positive way of conceiving of the unconscious than that found in contemporary writing and public discourse. As cases like Lockhart's and their treatment in crime novels suggest, the unconscious could be seen as a store of negativity, of murderous fantasies, repressed sexual impulses and traumatic memories. Although, of course, Wimsey's dissociation is traumatic, his war neurosis is nonetheless explicitly linked to the creativity which enables him to solve the mystery. Whether his mental illness catalyses the unconscious processes through which he detects, or whether he experiences such vivid attacks because he has always been extraordinarily impressionable and associative in his mental functioning, is unclear. What is clear is that the unconscious is a dynamic aspect of mind, intrinsic to the holistic self, and uniquely fitted for processing and comprehending aspects of reality which baffle reason. Even when it is wounded, the unconscious bolsters rather than threatens reason.

Narrative Mode

Throughout the novel, different registers and narrative modes are employed in order to communicate the value of multiple perspectives. These perspectives contribute to the novel's argument in favour of idiosyncrasy and the subjective, and demonstrate significant overlaps with the innovative forms of representation found in the modernist novel. In the crime story, where it is necessary to obscure the truth from readers for much of the narrative, techniques such as the unreliable narrator, the long speech containing one useful detail surrounded by much detritus, and the revelation of a fact in the midst of a frightening or exciting episode, are common. Sayers goes further, and in her invocation of other representational registers than traditionally reliable ones – such as the court transcript and accurately recorded conversation – she demonstrates the validity of more subjective narrative modes.

The scene in which Wimsey uses subterfuge to encourage a student to remember intricate details he thought he had forgotten has been discussed. What it demonstrates is that life is not a logical succession of details connected together in a linear way, but an aggregation of sense impressions which cannot be accessed through meticulous questioning, but only through the evocation of the scene in its multi-sensory complexity, as it was experienced by the individual at the time. Life is not something the individual responds to rationally, something that the mind consciously processes and converts into facts but, as Woolf puts it, 'a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel' (190). Wimsey nudges these unconsciously recorded impressions into life when he questions the student, and his success in doing so demonstrates that the individual is not an inferior source of information about reality – individual perception is a valid means of acquiring knowledge, and all we have.

The importance placed upon individual perspective accounts for the use of the rare second person narrative mode in the scene. As Wimsey quizzes the student, the transition between the third person 'he' and second person 'you' happens quite suddenly in the midst of a paragraph and lasts only a short time before returning to the standard third person at the paragraph's close (148). A humorous estrangement is achieved, as the student tries and fails to make sense of Wimsey's welcoming attitude, and perceives the detective – 'rather a small man' (148) – in ways that resist the more affirmative depictions of Peter elsewhere. Problematising the neutrality of the narrative voice, the use of the second person here foregrounds the multiple, subjective readings to which a scene is open. It is also highly unusual. In his study of the second-person modes, Brian Richardson notes that it has little history before the modernist era. He traces only a few instances in the modern novel, including one instance in the works of both May Sinclair and Jean Rhys, but does not mention Lewis Grassic Gibbon's striking use of the second person in a riot scene in "Grey Granite" (1934). It was employed by May Sinclair in her 1919 novel *Mary Olivier: A Life* in depictions of her protagonist's infancy. Influenced by Freud, Sinclair allows the 'you' and the 'her' to shift from passage to passage, merging

concrete reality with internal fantasy and displaying the fluidity of her young heroine's ego as she interacts with a world from which she is not yet fully distinct:

> In the dark you could go tip-finger along the slender lashing flourishes of the ironwork. … that way you got into the grey lane where the prickly stones were and the hedge of little biting trees. When the door in the hedge opened you saw the man in the night-shirt. He had only half a face. (3)

Here a conscious, physical encounter morphs into a nightmare, but elsewhere it is used to describe the oceanic bliss of primary narcissism, a comforting and receptive world in which colours, sensations and feelings are as one.

To Brian Richardson, the second person is a uniquely innovative, estranging and self-conscious mode: it is 'assiduous ... in depicting the stream of impressions, thoughts, and subverbal speech of the protagonist' (22) as well as offering 'new possibilities of creative representation, particularly for revealing a mind in flux' (B. Richardson 35). In *Whose Body?*, it is used to foreground individual perceptions**,** misapprehensions and misunderstandings, implicating the reader in the impressions as they are received by the character and attesting to the uncertainty of the individual who is forming them. The mode is therefore amusing when it is used to explore the mind of a clueless witness: it is quite original when applied to the detective. Based upon the student's evidence, Wimsey advises an exhumation of the corpse of a medical specimen dissected in the hospital. This grisly graveyard scene details the moment Wimsey's suspicions are confirmed, but even so, his impressions express uncertainty, emotion, fallibility and imaginative responsiveness hardly expected in the detective. He is not an active participant in the scene, not even a meticulous observer, but an impressionable perceiver. He is fearful and walks indecisively: 'The vile, raw fog tore your throat and ravaged your eyes. You could not see your feet. You stumbled in your walk over poor men's graves' (173). The narration is terse: 'A black-bearded spectre at your elbow. Introduced. The Master of the Workhouse' (174). The narrator is balanced between the external world and his own internal reality, relating to the world through the unconscious associations that impressions jog – the black bearded man who is first perceived as a spectre – an

impression which is modified by a fact (the man is the Master of the Workhouse), but does not exactly recede.

Displaying a resemblance with techniques employed on the grand scale by Marcel Proust, initial impressions may be modified by subsequent experience, but they continue to colour one's perceptions. For example, '[t]wo Dantesque shapes with pitchforks loomed up' (173), and then later, the 'lurching departure of the Dante demons – good, decent demons in corduroy' (174). These 'good, decent' men are not demons, but the association is there, and cannot be detached.[21] Other details stand out merely because they are visually striking, for example: 'A space cleared at the table. The lamplight on the Duchess's white hair' (176). Impressionistic details such as these are being registered somewhere other than consciousness, and in a language the rational mind cannot understand. What will be remembered from the scene is not the facts of what took place, but these instants – the corduroy of the departing men, the glow of the white hair, the way shapes emerged from the darkness and form themselves into solid objects, the creaks, scrapes and clangs which are recorded because they affect the perceiver and are part of the same experience as the wavering light of lantern and the brilliant circle of the electric lamp. When the exhumation is subsequently related, in the dry language of the medical report or in the clear and concise evidence of the courtroom, those accounts will be the less authentic distillation of fact from life which is experienced, in the words of Woolf, not as 'a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged' but 'a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end' ("Modern Fiction" 189).

As he is the detective, Wimsey's is the eye that is supposed to unify all the divergent strands of the story, whose observations will be proved to be true, accurate and reliable. In the graveyard scene, all of these functions of the detective are realised, in spite of the use of the impressionistic 'you'. This is not because Wimsey's impressions are pertinent and reliable – they are often not – but because the novel admits uncertainty and idiosyncrasy as part of the subjective perspective which it ultimately celebrates.

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[21] Early in the novel Wimsey purchases an old edition of Dante, and this perhaps is placed there to later account for his unconscious connection.

Compared to the self-assurance of Freke, Wimsey's uncertainty is both epistemologically and morally preferable. Confirmation of this comes in the letter which Freke composes at the novel's close, which supplants the classic detective's dénouement. It offers a meticulously detailed account of the crime, of Freke's motivation and the exact emotions and sensations he experienced whilst committing the crime: 'I was interested to note that I was rather extra hungry at breakfast, showing that my night's work had caused a certain wear-and-tear of tissue' (194) he records banally. At the letter's close, Freke trusts that 'I have made clear to you any point which you may have found obscure' and recounts how he has killed himself and donated his body to medical science (195). Despite the authoritative assertion of the written 'I', neither statement is true. Freke is arrested before he can kill himself (actually mid-sentence – the letter trails off). Although he has given the reader all the facts, no methodical, scientific account truly explains his crime. The rational, explicating and analysing ego is flawed, while only Wimsey's impressionistic uncertainty comes close to grasping the crime, and its horror.

In *Whose Body?* and *Traitor's Purse*, the allusive wilfulness of memory and the passive, absorptive quality of consciousness initially raise questions about the reliability of the detective, putting the figure on a level with his psychologically fallible suspects and with the more contemplative, inward looking subjects of modernist fiction. Ultimately, these novels suggest that insights gained by irrational association and ideas garnered emotionally, from the mysterious depths of the unconscious, can surpass reason. Their detectives' methods are ethical alternatives to the drive to know and to dominate bound up in the rational method. Allowing the atoms to fall rather than taking a microscope to them, these detectives act in ways that were profoundly influenced by contemporary psychological discourses and their modernist literary employment.

Dénouement

On the pages of golden age crime novels, irrational detectives contradict writers' self-imposed formulaic demands for reason-embodying deductive heroes, while pathetically deranged criminals resist the genre's supposed delight in easy closure. In a form credited, or rather dismissed, for being reassuring, for probing fears of transgression and otherness only to assuage them in the scapegoating and punishment of morally culpable offenders, the presence of madness in many plots is an obstacle to the unproblematic expulsion of the criminal at the novel's close. A just resolution is both a narrative and an ethical demand in golden age crime novels, but texts such as Mitchell's *When Last I Died* and *The Saltmarsh Murders* highlight the weaknesses of contemporary laws and legal structures, be they the M'Naghten Rules or state provision for young offenders, and reveal their incapacity to provide justice for both the mentally ill and the healthy. The detective figure, occasionally no longer an emissary of the written law but its wilful transgressor, takes on a new and controversial ethical role. Siding with the criminal as victim, in Mitchell's novels the detective often introduces the group to new ways of thinking about crime and motivation which confront their prejudices and lead to reappraisals of the golden age form itself. While many golden age novels are undoubtedly escapist, conservative and socially detached, by paying close attention to the socially engaged, ethically confrontational and highly self-reflective novels which were also produced during this period, we can see a more heterogeneous and complex picture of the form emerging.

Psychology is central to this ulterior history of the golden age form. Psychoanalytic understanding is employed in many texts to break down barriers between pathological and 'normal' thought processes, while a range of conditions are cited in order to account for outlandish motivations, meaning that the irrational becomes unostentatiously inculcated in the reason of the plot. When not believed to be caused by an inborn moral or intellectual deficiency, cases of criminal madness raise questions about the impact of environment, social and gender disadvantage, trauma and upbringing

on the character and consciousness of individuals. This complicates the easy divisions that critics have supposed these novels to make routinely between the group and the transgressor. As novels like Christianna Brand's *Green for Danger* and Gladys Mitchell's *St Peter's Finger* demonstrate, criminal motivation is not a case of isolated individual pathology, but is moulded in relation to social realities, necessitating a reassessment of that reality and more self-aware, even self-reproachful, responses from the group.

The central place of psychological discourses in the golden age novel both incites and responds to specific cultural anxieties about selfhood – the limits of autonomy, the threat of unconscious deviance, and doubts about biological versus self-determination. Depictions of the detective as diagnostician of the self speak to these fears, but so too do they draw attention to further-reaching anxieties about conflicts between competing institutionalised discourses which claim to explain the individual to the community and to themselves. In Miles Franklin's *Bring the Monkey* and Agatha Christie's *The ABC Murders*, the detective assures characters of their sanity against the misinterpretations of an archaic and biased medical profession, while Gladys Mitchell's Mrs Bradley frequently defends the fragile subject against an uncomprehending, unsubtle and misinformed legal system. For a genre often characterised as escapist and detached, these fears evidently respond to the cultural legitimisation of certain forms of knowledge and their perceived lacks, making the crime novel an important site for the exploration and affirmation of selfhood in the context of developing medical and psychological discourses of sanity and insanity.

Clashes of interpretation mark a number of novels in this study, from the progressive stance adopted towards young offenders in Mitchell's *When Last I Died* to the meticulous focus upon disordered states of mind and their impact upon the reasoning of the detective in the two novels discussed in chapter five. In my introduction I reconsidered Susan Rowland's suggestion that the law and the crime novel are structured as masculine and feminine respectively in light of the central position of madness in many novels; as I suggested, crime fiction is treated as a supplement to the

law, including irrational elements that the law cannot express and acknowledging that objectivity and reason are often seen as flawed means of understanding and explaining crime. Reason and logic, the underlying ordering structures which, as writers repeatedly affirm, their terse and unadorned clue-puzzle forms are supposed to reveal, are shown to be rather different in nature to what may be expected, or even quite useless, as they intersect with psychological understandings. On the one hand, irrational outbursts are fitted into logical structures, as in the psychologically sensitive plotting of Brand's *Heads You Lose*, while the introduction of scientific prejudices and questionable psychological knowledge into plots as if they were fact (as in Michael Innes' *Death at the President's Lodging*) demonstrates how relatively specialist psychological concepts are accepted as a reasonable explanation for criminal motivations within the genre. On the other hand, instances of irrational or unconscious detection seen in Sayers' *Whose Body?* and Allingham's *Traitor's Purse,* depict the rejection of reason outright, as psychological understandings inflected by modernist writing encourage a flourishing of alternate epistemologies rarely associated with the golden age form.

Within crime fiction scholarship, questions about the form's literary status are often raised. While some critics cast golden age writing as an antidote to demanding modernist fiction, others have traced the presence of modernist concerns and modernist techniques within the form. The similarities between descriptions of the recording and perceiving consciousness and the synthesising, irrational unconscious discussed in chapter five attest to the need for focused intertextual analysis of crime fiction in relation to modernist writing, with implications for academic criticism of both the quality of the writing and the themes dealt with in golden age crime novels. In recent years, there has been increasing scholarly focus upon middlebrow novels in the context of interwar modernism (see Brown and Grover; also Blanch and Sullivan), which has drawn attention to the dissemination of high, middle and low traits and tropes across the 'brows' in texts which consciously self-fashion, are unconsciously shaped, or mis/identify with the literary aesthetics of the different readerships (see Blanch and Sullivan on ambivalence and uncertainty in female-penned writing, 3). In relation to

such work, my discussion of crime fiction in relation to modernist writing has not so much sought the point of origin of ideas and styles (although this has in some cases been apparent, as for example in the discussion of *Whose Body?* in relation to narrative mode in May Sinclair's writing) but has drawn attention to the influence of psychology and popular discourses of insanity – for example, in print media (as discussed in chapter four) – in both modernist and crime writing. These readings assert the validity of an intertexual approach in the study of narrative and thematic literary cross-fertilisation during the interwar years.

A final conclusion, a dénouement, an account of what takes place in the golden crime novel which will bring satisfaction and closure, is an impossibility. Golden age novels are far from homogenous, meaning that a final explanation of how psychology interacts with the form cannot meaningfully be applied to such a proliferation of texts. As many novels demonstrate, the capture of the criminal can mark not the end, but the beginning of an uncontainable problem. Attesting to the capacity of narrative fiction to generate feeling and meaning through refusing to do what it has asked its readers to expect, this is perhaps a fitting assertion upon which to end.

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T H E U N I V E R S I T Y O F E D I N B U R G H

ACCESS TO A THESIS AND PUBLICATION OF ABSTRACT

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